

INSIGHTS INTO INTEGRATION PATHWAYS

NEW SCOTS & THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

A report drawing on year two of the Holistic Integration Service

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The evaluation team receives ongoing and excellent support from the members¹ of the Advisory Group, who act as critical friends and explore additional ways to expand our learning.

Finally, we would like to thank Big Lottery Scotland for funding the Holistic Integration Service and for enabling it to be a learning project by supporting the evaluation from the outset of the project.

Since 2010 BIG Lottery Scotland has focused on three investment areas through its main grants programmes in Scotland, 'Investing in Communities' (IiC): Growing Community Assets; Supporting 21st Century Life; and Life Transitions in IiC. Overall, the 'Investing in Communities' programme has a primary focus on tackling need and addressing inequalities.

It was decided at the outset of developing 'Investing in Communities' that BIG Lottery Scotland would take a proactive

approach to funding in some areas by developing specific interventions. One of these areas is improving access to mainstream services for asylum seekers and refugees.

This led to the creation of the ***Joining A New Community*** (JNC) intervention in July 2012, involving a total contract value budget of between £1.8M and £2M (inclusive of VAT). The JNC intervention sought to add value to, be additional to and complement existing support and services for refugees and asylum seekers in Scotland.

What BIG Fund?

Joining a new community: improving access to mainstream services for asylum seekers and refugees and supporting people who have experienced violence



The outcome BIG want to achieve

Refugees and asylum seekers are better able to access appropriate health, housing, education and employment services

The Holistic Integration Service led by Scottish Refugee Council in partnership with Bridges Programmes, British Red Cross, Glasgow Clyde College and Workers Educational Association Scotland was successful in winning this bid in October 2012. The Holistic Integration Service mobilised from February to May 2013 and is expected to run over a three year period.

A key requirement is to capture and share the learning and impact from this investment to ensure a lasting legacy. A learning team led by Queen Margaret University has been working with the Holistic Integration Service from the outset and will continue to do so from an action learning perspective.

¹ Margaret-Ann Brünjes (Glasgow Homelessness Network), Susan Fleming (NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde), Ros Micklem (Consultant), Andrew Morrison (COSLA, Migration Partnership), Lesley Musa (Scottish Government), Dr. Jenny Phillimore (University of Birmingham) and Dr. Alison Phipps (University of Glasgow)

Foreword

The Holistic Integration Service continues at a time of great change. Year 2 has seen the Partnership implement the recommendations from our first year learning report and continue to take an action research approach. Evidence continues to inform our planning and service delivery and we remain faithful to workforce and organisational development through our Community of Practice. We see our Partnership as an Impact Network and are committed to share our learning with wider stakeholders: refugees and asylum seekers being the primary audience.

As a Partnership, and as this report details, we have continued to maintain our innovative approach to integration: recognising the self-agency of refugees and ensuring that we take an *early intervention*² approach.

Prevention of destitution and poverty has been challenging in the immediate short term. New asylum support and advice services do not include any integration work. This means meeting the need caused by the increase in numbers of grants by the Home Office and the immediate and increased destitution and workload aggravated by administrative errors and dysfunctional systems. The report evidences how vital our interventions and advocacy are in the critical transition period to mainstream benefits and housing, before people can meaningfully engage about their future.

We have sought to work in *partnership* with statutory bodies and the wider voluntary sector to improve outcomes for refugees and asylum seekers. A key vehicle for this has been the 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' strategy³. Our

Holistic Integration Service informed the design, content and delivery of the New Scots Year 1 Impact Conference in January 2015 and is recognised in the subsequent progress report⁴ as being critical to rethinking integration. We have highlighted the diversity and dynamism of refugees and asylum seekers and provided insights into their lives challenging other delegates to reconsider how they work with them, to recognise their self-agency and resilience, and to take an asset-based approach to working in partnership.

Our Holistic Integration Service is committed to collaborative learning and working collectively to better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like. Throughout Year 2 we have done so with a range of stakeholders and informed the refresh and review of much integration work. For example, the 'Glasgow Homeless Strategy 2015-20', 'Welcoming our Learners Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-20'⁵, a mapping of integration networks in Glasgow and work with the Department for Work and Pensions to develop an award winning new Refugee Customer Journey.

This recognition has extended internationally. We have shared our learning with peer refugee agencies and groups in the wider UK, and highlighted our insights to the UK Government. In a time of ongoing austerity and wider hostility to migrants and refugees, our work with fellow New Scots is more vital than ever. In the next year we are committed to continue to inform integration at home and abroad encouraged by the UNHCR statement:

"It is our firm belief that this holistic approach has played a vital role in rebuilding the lives of people who have fled conflict and persecution, and empowering them to make positive contributions to their new communities"⁶

2 The Holistic Integration Service is based on the following principles: early intervention – prevention - recognising resilience and vulnerability - partnership - sustainability. Our approach mirrors the Scottish Government priorities set in response to the Christie Report, 'Renewing Scotland's Public Services' September 2011

3 'New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' Scottish Government December 2013

4 [New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities: Year 1: Implementation Progress Report](#) March 2015

5 <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/communitylearninganddevelopment/adultlearning/ESOL/policy/strategy.asp>

6 [New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities: Year 1: Implementation Progress Report](#) March 2015

As Scotland continues to define itself post Referendum, the learning from the Holistic Integration Service identifies opportunities to alleviate some of the issues in this report through the extended devolution proposals put forward by the Smith Commission whether these apply explicitly to asylum seekers or welfare.

We are committed to not only identifying what works in Scotland but how all stakeholders can use evidence to make decisions about

public service development and reform. As a Partnership we aim to ensure that our learning underpins sustainability not only for us and other agencies but the people for and with whom we work: New Scots.

Joe Brady, Head of Integration Services
Scottish Refugee Council



New Scots Impact Conference, Wafa Shaheen from Scottish Refugee Council and Faye Suso from Scottish Refugee Policy Forum and [GAMSCA](#) – Photo by Iman Tajik

Executive Summary

The Holistic Integration Service (HIS) is a partnership between [Scottish Refugee Council](#), [British Red Cross](#), [Bridges Programmes](#), [Glasgow Clyde College](#) and [Workers Educational Association Scotland](#) offering up to twelve months support to people who have been granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave to Remain following an asylum claim in Scotland. This report shares evidence (from the Joint Client Data Base and focus group discussions with HIS beneficiaries) on new refugees' experiences of progress in integration and reflections on the impact of the Holistic Integration Service model. Particular attention is paid to concerns about access to rights, statutory and other services in relation to Housing and Benefits.

A detailed summary of our key findings can be found at the beginning of each section, as indicated by the page numbers given in our summary of key emerging issues.

Profile of new refugees: April 1st 2014 - March 31st 2015

- 882 new refugees accessed the Holistic Integration Service.
- Largest nationality groups were: Eritrea; (36%); Sudan (16%); Iran (14%); Syria (8%); People's Republic of China (6%).
- 84% received full Refugee status (6% drop from 2013/14).
- 54% were between 25 and 34 years old.
- 71% were men and 29% women.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

The Holistic Integration Service is having a positive impact upon the ability of new refugees to access their rights and progress on their integration journeys.

Early Intervention and Prevention

The vast majority of HIS beneficiaries need early intervention to prevent their experiencing acute difficulties in their own integration pathway. The service has provided early intervention in supporting access to temporary accommodation and settled accommodation; Benefits; English language assessments and ESOL courses; employment and emotional support.

The HIS programme has impacted on:

- ▶ Reducing homelessness;
- ▶ Reducing prolonged overcrowding or other unsuitable housing;
- ▶ Preventing and reducing destitution by enabling refugees to access benefit payments;
- ▶ Reducing social isolation (resulting from poor language skills, and lack of access to employment, training and services).
- ▶ Reducing deterioration of refugees' mental health.

Finding sustainable solutions

The HIS service has enabled new refugees to build sustainable lives through:

- ▶ Accessing settled satisfactory housing.
- ▶ Achieving financial stability
- ▶ Acquiring basic English language skills
- ▶ Accessing health care
- ▶ Making friends
- ▶ Making careers choices and associated education and training plans

Promoting Learning through Partnership

The programme has facilitated the exchange of learning and knowledge at multiple levels:

- ▶ **Community of Practice:** front-line staff working together to understand and address challenges experienced by beneficiaries.
- ▶ **Impact Network:** partnership managers working together to address partnership and external structural challenges to refugee integration.
- ▶ **Wider Integration Network:** learning partners sharing insights and facilitating engagement across the wider community of practice.
- ▶ **Community Conferences:** raising awareness on specific integration domains with asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland.
- ▶ **‘New Scots: Integration Refugees in Scotland’s Communities’:** contributing data to inform the policy development and implementation process and helping to deliver the action plans.

KEY ISSUES: YEAR TWO

It has become increasingly clear during year two of HIS that the service is needed even by many resilient new refugees simply to access basic rights. It can reasonably be concluded from our data that certain statutory services and rights – housing and benefits – are currently not accessible to legitimate beneficiaries acting independently.

► **Access to Rights: Housing (pages 22-26)**

New refugees do not experience a smooth accommodation transition within the 'move on' period. 'New Scots' Strategy "move on" group and Glasgow City Council Homeless strategy have yet to address this issue successfully.

► **Access to Rights: Benefits and delayed issue of NINo (pages 26-31)**

Our data shows clearly that the vast majority of new refugees experience destitution between asylum support and receipt of their mainstream benefits. Procedural delays in issuing a NINo are a major cause of this despite the work of the 'New Scots' 'move on' group in 2014.

► **Access to Rights: Imposition of Benefit sanctions (pages 31-32)**

Our data shows that new refugees who claim Jobseeker's Allowance are not appropriately equipped by DWP to agree and comply with their Claimant Commitment.

► **Improving the service: ESOL learners need increased access to flexible provision (pages 33-37)**

Beneficiaries appreciate the flexibility and learner-centred approach of HIS ESOL courses; however their learning is impeded by limited class hours and gaps in access to courses.

► **Improving the service: Working together as a learning partnership (pages 37-41)**

Year two has seen closer collaboration between partners, and between the Impact Network (Joint Management Board) and the Community of Practice (frontline staff). This should be built upon in the next phase of the service.

► **Improving the service: Impacts of changes in Asylum Advice Services (page 58)**

It appears that the move of the Asylum Advice Services to another agency along with a major reduction in capacity of these advice services has impeded new refugees' level of access to HIS.

► **Improving the service: Impacts of patterns of engagement with Integration Advisers (page 59)**

The capacity of Integration Advisers to ensure effective early intervention and prevention through planned assessments and reviews has been compromised due to the need to support even resilient refugees in accessing basic rights and services.

Recommendations

These recommendations have been formulated in the context of the detailed case examples and case management data provided in the full body of the report and should be read in conjunction with this.

1.UK GOVERNMENT

- 1.1 Home Office** to ensure that every new refugee receives their National Insurance Number (NINo) at the same time as their notification of status.
- 1.2 Home Office** to ensure that every adult dependant of a new refugee receives their National Insurance Number (NINo) at the same time as the notification of status.
- 1.3 Home Office** to ensure Asylum Accommodation providers fulfil their contractual obligation (as per COMPASS Project Schedule 2) to work with Local Authorities to prevent homelessness by notifying them of positive decisions allocated to asylum applicants living within their area immediately. This will enable the housing allocation process to begin at the start of the 28 day 'move on' period and avoid predictable homelessness.
- 1.4 Home Office** to invest in adequate preparation of asylum seekers for the 28 day 'move on' period to ensure that every new refugee understands the actions that they need to take to apply for benefits and housing – and that they are aware of the support services available to them.

- 1.5 Department for Work and Pensions** to establish and operate an appropriate performance measure to ensure that all new refugees are issued with National Insurance Number (NINo) at the same time as their notification of status.
- 1.6 Department for Work and Pensions** to establish and operate an appropriate performance measure to ensure that all adult dependents of new refugees are issued with National Insurance Number (NINo) at the same time as the notification of status.
- 1.7 Department for Work and Pensions** to refine regulations and guidance to ensure that women with children dependent on breastfeeding and living with a partner who is still in the asylum process are not required to seek work.
- 1.8 Department for Work and Pensions** to develop a faster application process for Employment Support Allowance and Income Support to ensure claimants receive their benefit payment without experiencing destitution.
- 1.9 Department for Work and Pensions** to recognise the need to access all four Scottish Qualification Authority ESOL units to ensure adequate access to appropriate ESOL learning for new refugees in Scotland, in line with the language requirement for citizenship.
- 1.10 Department for Work and Pensions** to refine performance measures and staff training to ensure that across all Jobcentre Plus offices new refugees are fully able to understand their 'Claimant Commitment' before signing.
- 1.11 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs Office** to introduce and operate appropriate performance measures to ensure that all eligible new refugees receive Child Benefit and Tax Credits by the end of the 28 day 'move on' period.

2. UK AND SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

- 2.1 Westminster and Holyrood** to agree 'executive devolution' to enable the Scottish Government to provide accommodation, financial support and advice to asylum seekers in Scotland, and ensure that any welfare proposals guarantee that new refugees do not fall through the safety net.

3. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND STATUTORY BODIES

- 3.1 Scottish Government** to use data from 'Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grant's allocation to demonstrate levels of destitution created by the structure and failure of the current UK Benefits system.
- 3.2 Scottish Government** to address affordability of social housing and security of tenure.
- 3.3 Scottish Government** to use the data emerging from the Holistic Integration Service to inform the implementation of the strategy: New Scots – Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities.
- 3.4 Scottish Government** New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland's Communities' strategy and stakeholders to promote work experience and employment opportunities for refugees.
- 3.5 NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde** to continue to support the work of the 'Health Bridging Team' in supporting asylum seekers to register with a GP.
- 3.6 NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde** to ensure that personnel across all GP practices where new refugees are settling are aware of new refugees' rights in access to health services.

- 3.7 Strategic bodies** e.g. NHS Scotland and Glasgow Centre for Population Health to recognise that refugees have been, and will continue to be a significant part of a diverse and dynamic population and plan for this.

4. LOCAL AUTHORITIES & HOUSING PROVIDERS

- 4.1 Local Authorities** to ensure that new refugees are made aware of (either before or immediately upon receiving status) and able to access relevant support services including services specific to new refugees such as the Holistic Integration Services.
- 4.2 Local Authorities** to ensure that the housing allocation process begins at the start of the 28 day 'move on' period for each new refugee to avoid predictable homelessness.
- 4.3 Local Authorities** to provide temporary accommodation at a cost which remains affordable if new refugees lose entitlement to Housing Benefit due to employment, ESOL or other educational courses.
- 4.4 Social Housing Providers** in Glasgow to establish a shared application process that is accessible to those with low levels of English and simple for all to use.
- 4.5 Social Housing Providers** across Glasgow (GCC & Housing Associations) to support and promote the development of a peer support mechanism for housing applicants – potentially using a 'Peer Education model'.
- 4.6 Local authorities** to engage with private landlords to address the needs of new refugee tenants.

5. ESOL PROVIDERS & FUNDERS

- 5.1 **Adult Education Funders** should ensure that funding structures enable ESOL providers to deliver flexible courses that meet the learning needs and access needs of new refugee learners.
- 5.2 **ESOL providers** to develop ways to capture smaller and more nuanced progress steps in acquiring English language skills.
- 5.3 **ESOL providers** to collaborate to enable new refugees to have access to continuous language learning support.
- 5.4 **ESOL providers** to deliver courses that promote opportunities for learners to acquire local cultural knowledge.
- 5.5 **ESOL providers** to deliver courses that promote opportunities for learners to develop and build sustainable social networks.
- 5.6 **ESOL Providers & Funders** to explore approaches to ESOL that allow learners much more intensive practice in using their English language skills in the early stages.

6. WIDER STAKEHOLDERS

- 6.1 **Organisations** supporting asylum seekers to raise awareness and prepare them for the demands of the 'move on' period.
- 6.2 **Immigration advisers** to ensure that all new refugee clients are notified of status decision, necessary actions and NINO allocation immediately on receipt of a decision.
- 6.3 **Organisations** supporting new refugees should prioritise initiatives that bring together new and established Scots in contexts of active interaction.

7. THE HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

- 7.1 **Holistic Integration Service Partners** should promote opportunities to support new refugees to make decisions about education, training and jobs in the context of local, informal cultural knowledge – potentially using a 'Peer Education' model⁸.
- 7.2 **Scottish Refugee Council** to work with other partners to raise awareness of new refugees' needs across the private housing sector.
- 7.3 **Scottish Refugee Council** to work with other partners to raise awareness of new refugees' needs across the employment sector.
- 7.4 **Holistic Integration Service Partners** to ensure that all support and courses provided maximise opportunities for new refugees to build up social connections.
- 7.5 **Holistic Integration Service Partners** to continue to work together to share their learning not only within the partnership, but also with others involved in supporting new refugees.

⁸ Refugee Peer Education for Health and Well being. Evaluation Report May 2015.
http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/9691/Peer_Education_Evaluation_Report_FINAL.pdf

SECTION A: INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. What is the Holistic Integration Service?

The Holistic Integration Service (HIS) offers up to twelve months support to people who have been granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave to Remain following an asylum claim in Scotland.

The Holistic Integration Service is a partnership between [Scottish Refugee Council](#), [British Red Cross](#), [Bridges Programmes](#), [Glasgow Clyde College](#) and [Workers Educational Association Scotland](#). Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers (with the help of volunteers⁹) provide an advice and support service, addressing initial critical needs and offering help to access services such as welfare benefits, housing and health. They also support people to identify and achieve their own goals in education and employment while maintaining financial and housing stability.

1.2. Our Partnership

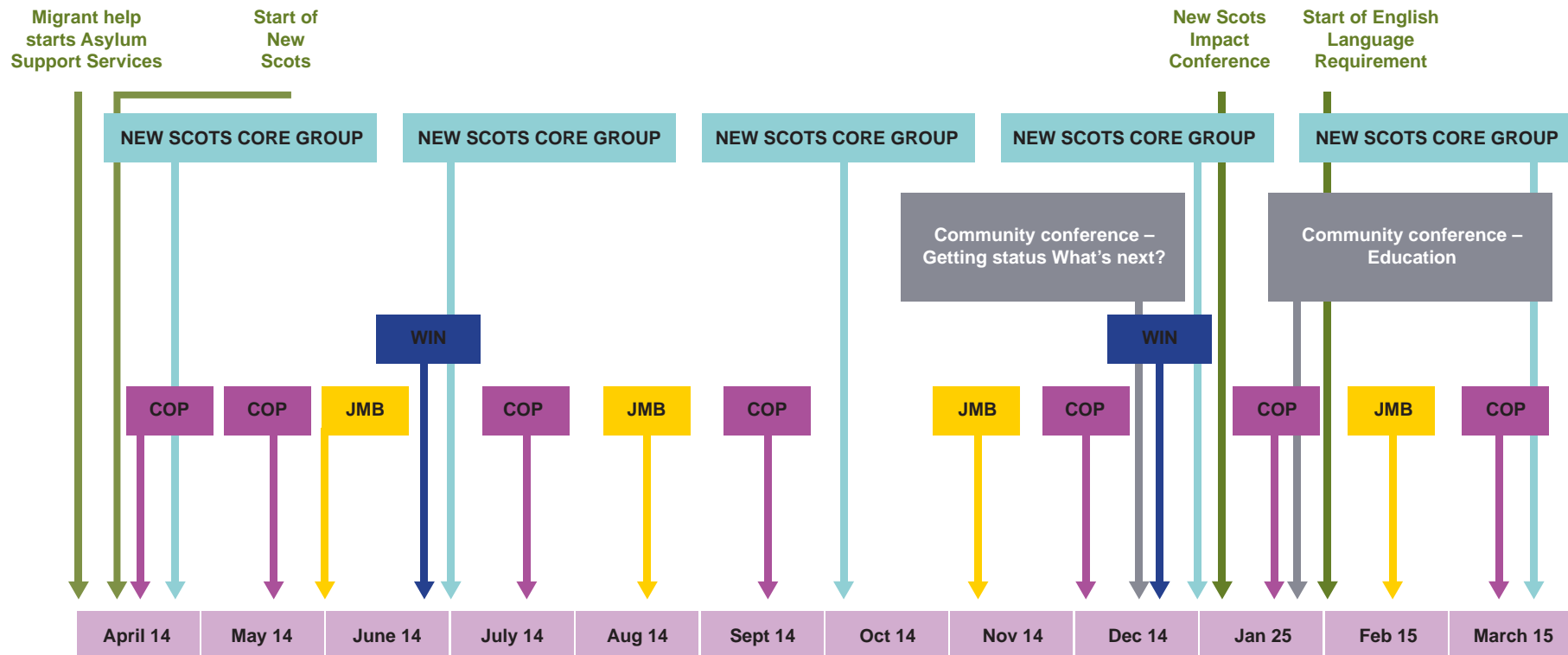
Partners work closely together as a learning community and impact network sharing information and learning to improve the service. [The Holistic Integration Service Year 1 Evaluation Report](#) provides more information about the respective roles of the partners and the approach to partnership. In addition partners are committed to sharing information widely with other stakeholders to improve conditions for new refugees. Learning has been shared between the partners on an ongoing basis, and with wider stakeholders through 'Wider Integration Network' events and the other ongoing

work of each partner. The Holistic Integration Service has consistently contributed data and learning to support each stage of the development and implementation of the Scottish Government integration strategy, [New Scots, Integrating Refugees in Scotland Communities](#).

⁹ Volunteers assist advisers at drop-in and have a critical role in assisting new refugees to claim benefits

HOLISTIC INTEGRATION SERVICE

- Joint Management Board (JMB)
- Community Practice (COP)
- Wider Integration Network (WIN – Learning Events)



1.3. Priorities for this report

This interim report will focus on the two core concerns of the evaluation: reporting evidence of our new refugees' experiences of progress in integration and reflecting on the impact of the Holistic Integration Service model.

At the end of the first year of the evaluation a series of key issues emerged from the data:

Integration Pathways – Key Issues

- ▶ **Mental Health & Well-being:** What are the potential stressors on mental health and well-being experienced by new refugees? What coping strategies do they use, and what support is most effective?
- ▶ **Housing:** How long are new refugees staying in temporary accommodation? What factors are linked to this and what impact does living in temporary accommodation have on their integration?
- ▶ **Language:** What levels of English language competence do current new refugees demonstrate and how do they progress during their engagement with the service? What are the impacts of language levels and course attendance on integration?
- ▶ **Employment and Employability:** What can we learn from the profile and experiences of those who get jobs? How do new refugees shape and adjust their aspirations and actions?

- ▶ **Access to Benefits:** How long are new refugees waiting to receive benefits and what factors are related to delays? Who experiences benefit sanctions? What are the impacts of delays and sanctions on integration?
- ▶ **Social Connections:** What patterns of social connection are developed by new refugees? How successful are they in developing social 'bonds' and how does the service promote this? How successful are they in developing social 'bridges' and how does the service promote this?
- ▶ **Independent Agency:** How do new refugees exercise independent agency? What factors inhibit or promote independent agency?



New Scots Impact Conference – Photo by Iman Tajik

These issues have shaped the data collection plan for years two and three. We have collected detailed information on key issues to amplify the ongoing comprehensive data collection through the Joint Client Data Base (JCDB) and through partner data. In addition to analysis of data from the whole JCDB data set, selected cases (determined by the key issues) have been examined in detail. A series of focus group discussions has been conducted with HIS beneficiaries from British Red Cross, Bridges Programmes, Workers Educational Association Scotland and Glasgow Clyde College. Further focus group discussions were undertaken with members of the Community of Practice (comprising front-line staff from each partner) and with Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers. This year the Joint Management Board meetings have adopted an 'Impact Network' model: discussing issues arising from the learning and how this relates to wider policy and practice.

This report shares evidence on new refugees' experiences of progress in integration and reflections on the impact of the Holistic Integration Service model. In this report, particular attention is paid to concerns about access to rights, statutory and other services in relation to Housing and Benefits. The final phase of data collection in year three will involve individual interviews with new refugees, including those who have and have not been involved in the service. This data will contribute to our understanding of refugees' perspectives on all aspects of the evaluation.

1.4. Profile of New Refugees in Year Two

The data presented in this report is taken from case records from the Joint Client Database (JCDB) as inputted by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers; and from reports from all partners involved in the partnership from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

Data from the JCDB has mostly been analysed by quarterly cohorts¹⁰ each of which includes refugees who started engaging with the Holistic Integration Service during that period.

During the full year-long period, eight hundred and eighty-two households engaged with the service for a first advice session, called 'triage', during which new refugees are introduced to the service and receive advice on housing options and homelessness and support to make their first benefit claim. It is at triage that refugees will be offered an appointment for a language assessment with Workers Educational Association Scotland. Out of those households, four hundred and eighty-seven (just over half) attended a full assessment during which they developed an integration plan to identify steps to achieve their goals in housing, financial stability, education, employment, and social connections. During the full assessment refugees are offered access to opportunities with partners.

Out of those 487 households:

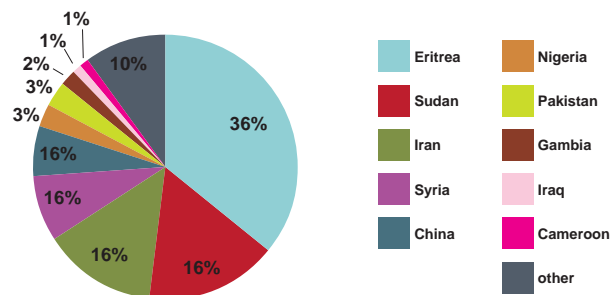
- 360 attended a language assessment with Workers Educational Association Scotland
- 245 people were invited to a class with Workers Educational Association Scotland and 113 started a course (Access 2 including Literacies 1 and 2, and Access 3)

¹⁰ With the exception of data on Benefits analysed by bi-monthly cohorts.

- 116 people engaged with Glasgow Clyde College and 32 people completed their course within the year (From Access 3 to Intermediate 2)
- 173 people engaged with the Bridges Programmes and 150 completed the full service within the year.
- 85 engaged with the enhanced support service of the British Red Cross.

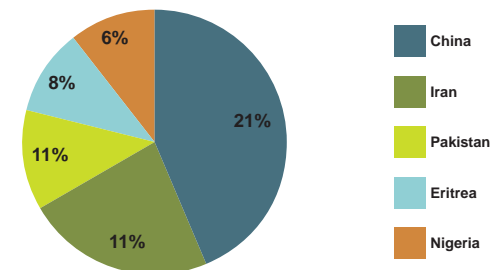
Nationalities of new refugees are similar to year one, with the main change being the appearance of Gambia and Cameroon in the top ten, replacing Ethiopia and Afghanistan. This remains a minor change as the nationality group represent only 1% or 2% of the refugee population who accessed the Holistic Integration Service¹¹.

HIS Beneficiaries – Top 10 nationalities



Data on outstanding asylum claims in Scotland by nationality¹² reveals a slightly different pattern. The largest number of claims during 2014 to 2015 has come from people from the People's Republic of China. Whereas only 6% of new refugees engaging with the HIS programme were from China. On the other hand it appears that a much higher proportion of Eritreans have accessed the service this year (36% of beneficiaries) than have claimed asylum. We do not have access to specific Scottish data¹³ on the nationalities of new refugees during 2014 therefore it is not possible to know whether these discrepancies reflect differences in positive decisions or differences in tendency to engage with the service.

Top 5 nationalities of asylum applicants in Scotland (Apr14)

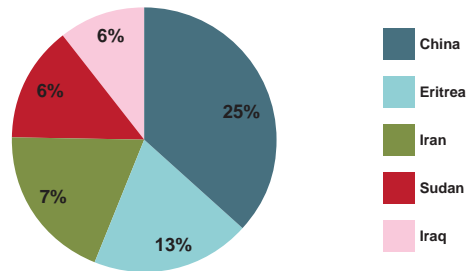


¹¹ Data on refugee profile on nationality, gender and age are representative of the head of the households and does not include everyone in the households.

¹² http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/0003/3935/Asylum_Statistics_Annual_Trends_Feb_2015.pdf Accessed 21.5.15

¹³ Snapshot data shown in both graphs below are from COSLA Migration Partnership

Top 5 nationalities of asylum applicants in Scotland (March15)

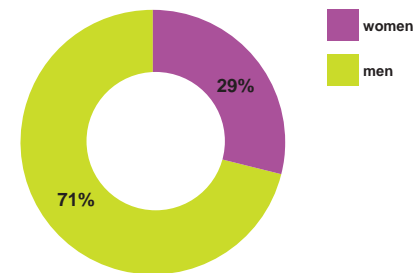


There is a decrease in the proportion of women heads of household from 33% in year one to 29% in year two. Otherwise, there are no significant changes in family composition or age range. It is important to note that refugees who arrive as single may have a spouse and children with whom they will hope to be reunited in the near future.

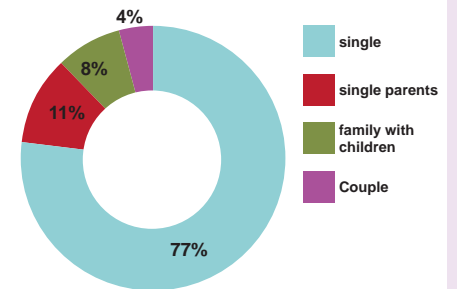
The main type of status granted continues to be Refugee Status; however there has been a decrease by 6% from last year. This is due to an increase of Discretionary Leave to Remain (DLR) from 9% in year one to 15% in year two. This raises some concerns because holders of DLR have reduced legal entitlements. For example, the length of the leave is shorter (an average of 2.5 years compared to 5) and they need to complete nine years of leave before being able to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). They will be charged health costs¹⁴ by the Home Office when renewing their leave and finally will need to meet income

and housing requirements to be eligible for family reunion. This insecurity of status could have an impact on people's integration outcomes¹⁵.

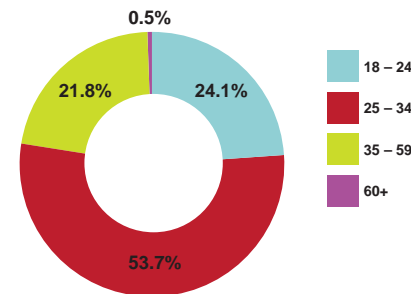
Gender



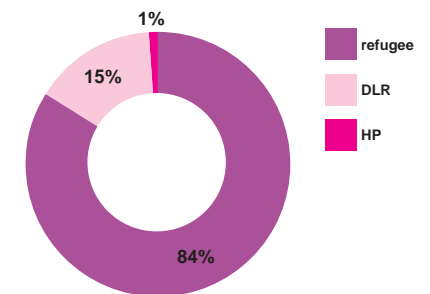
Family composition



Age



Type of status



¹⁴ £200 per year of leave to remain

¹⁵ 'Becoming British citizens? Experiences and opinions of refugees living in Scotland.' Stewart and Mulvey, 2011 http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/1460/Citizenship_report_Feb11.pdf

Through our records we can see that there is an identifiable range of circumstances that can characterise most new refugees who engage with the service:

Woman without dependants, under 35

Genet is a 29 year old woman, from Eritrea. She accessed HIS two months after she arrived in Glasgow. She does not know Glasgow very well but has met a lot of people while in initial accommodation. She has Access 3 level English and wants to work in Social Care. She gets support from Bridges Programmes and will do work placements.

Man without dependants, under 35

Mohammed is 24 years old and from Syria. He arrived in Glasgow six months before gaining leave to remain and engaging with HIS. He is staying in a homeless hostel. His Integration Adviser encouraged him to attend ESOL as a way to meet different people and have reasons to leave his hostel during the day.

Couple without dependants, under 35

Hossein and Ester are married. They are 28 and 32 and are from Iran. They both have degrees from Iran but don't feel they can do work in the same sector here. They got status a year after they arrived and still need to improve their English. Their language skills are Intermediate 1 and they were already in a class when they started engaging with HIS. They receive help from Bridges Programmes to gain work experience.

Woman head of household with children

Anah is a single mother from Nigeria, she is 35 years old and has three children aged 4, 8 and 11. She had been waiting for a decision on her asylum claim for 3 years and needed support to successfully engage with HMRC. She experienced delays in her benefit payment and had to rely on food banks and charitable grant to manage financially. She is on Income Support. Childcare issues limit her capacity to engage.

Couple with children

He and Lin are from China and have two children who are 6 months old and 3 years old. They both gained status and have a joint claim of Job Seekers Allowance. Neither speaks good English but they have good social connections and hope that Lin will find work quickly.

Man with dependents elsewhere (partner/children+ adopted children/parents)

Ahmed is a 31 year old man from Sudan. He is on his own in Glasgow but his wife and two children are still in Sudan. He attends Access 2 literacies classes through HIS. He is on Job Seeker's Allowance and wants to work but struggles to find anything due his English skills. He hopes to be reunited with his family and worries about housing as his family could arrive when he is still homeless and he cannot get a big enough flat until they are in Glasgow.

Over 35 years old

Parviz is 52 years old and is a single man from Iran. He has been in Glasgow for one year and his level of English is Access 3. He has a severe back problem that makes him unfit to work. He refused temporary accommodation because he was offered a shared bedroom in a hotel and instead managed to find friends to stay with. He attends ESOL classes and was referred to the British Red Cross for more support.



New Scots Impact Conference – Photo by Iman Tajik

SECTION B: **INTEGRATION** **PATHWAYS**

ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND SERVICES

2. Access to Housing

“Ahmed...wants to take his time [choosing a home] as he views having a good home as the basis to starting a good life.”

Key Integration Pathway Findings

- ▶ 92.5% of the new refugees who engaged with the service (#816) presented as homeless to their local authority following cessation of their asylum support.
- ▶ HIS beneficiaries (#120) who secured housing since the beginning of the service waited less time than the average time reported by Glasgow City Council's draft Homeless Strategy 2015 – 2020 (average 217 days).
- ▶ Costs of temporary accommodation are prohibitively high and put refugees into a poverty trap as they are unaffordable if refugees are not eligible for Housing Benefit (for example in low paid work or full-time education).
- ▶ 95% of beneficiaries who commented on settled housing secured during this year stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their housing.

Securing appropriate settled housing is vital to refugees' integration. Inadequate or insecure housing can have a negative impact across other integration domains making it difficult for new refugees to fully engage with the HIS programme.

A key concern in this domain is the impact upon service beneficiaries of lengthy periods spent in temporary housing prior to obtaining a secure tenancy. A more positive theme is evidence of the service's role in facilitating refugees' own agency when searching for settled housing, resulting in overall high levels of satisfaction with permanent housing.

2.1 Year Two – An Overview

From 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, HIS worked with eight hundred and sixteen households who presented as homeless to their local authority following cessation of their asylum support. This is 92.5% of the new refugees who engaged with the service.

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers provide service beneficiaries with information and advice on:

- Refugees' rights with regard to provision of temporary accommodation;
- Refugees' rights to support from a named homelessness caseworker in order to secure permanent housing;
- The role of specialist services e.g. in Glasgow, the Glasgow City Council's Asylum and Refugee Service;
- Other routes to permanent housing e.g. direct applications to Housing Associations; private letting.

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers may also take preventive actions to assist refugees during the initial 'move on' period, for example by notifying the Asylum and Refugee Service that a newly granted refugee is at imminent risk of homelessness. Finally, advisers continue to work with a range of social landlords with whom the service has negotiated direct nomination agreements. These are mostly offered to service beneficiaries with more complex needs such as health problems, overcrowding or the need for affordable space to study.

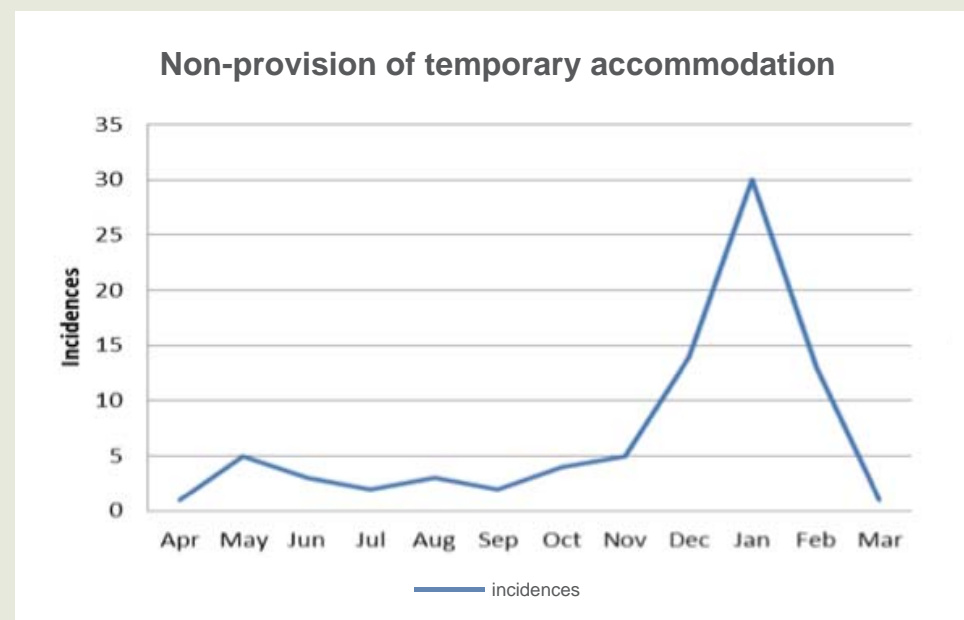
It is difficult to provide exact figures for the period of homelessness experienced by refugees who access HIS. Many refugees experience lengthy stays in temporary accommodation, which may exceed the period of their engagement with the service. However, available data shows that from 1st May 2013 until 31st March 2015, one hundred and twenty households secured housing (16.6 % of HIS beneficiaries) in an average of one hundred and eighty-two days. This compares favourably with the homeless population as a whole. Glasgow City Council's draft Homeless Strategy 2015 – 2020 indicates that they discharge their duty on average within two hundred and seventeen days (and the average stay in a temporary furnished flat is three hundred days). The shorter time spent by refugees in temporary accommodation demonstrates the positive impact of HIS advice and advocacy interventions.

2.2 Accessing temporary accommodation

New refugees will normally attend a full-assessment with their Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser after their first introduction to the service. Most refugees at this stage will either be in asylum accommodation provided by Orchard and Shipman on behalf of the Home Office or will have recently moved to temporary

accommodation. At the initial full assessment less than half of beneficiaries assessed their housing as quite suitable and only around 10% deemed it to be very suitable. Remaining respondents (on average around 45% of those in accommodation) expressed a need for changes. Particular problems have been identified when refugees are living in temporary accommodation, as we explore below.

Case record data shows a sharp increase in incidences of non-provision of temporary accommodation by Glasgow City Council in January 2015. In part this can be explained by an increase in positive decisions at the end of 2014. However, other stakeholders working on homelessness also observed increased difficulty in accessing temporary accommodation by the rest of the homeless population at this time¹⁶.



¹⁶ This was shared in discussions at the conference 'Who benefits – Welfare Legislation after the Smith Report' organised by Legal Service Agency on 3 March 2015

2.3 Quality of temporary accommodation

Many refugees will be offered 'Bed and Breakfast' or hostel accommodation – both of which can be particularly problematic. Refugees reported problems including disputes with other residents, experiences of racism; the lack of appropriate kitchen facilities; and more general feelings of heightened anxiety or depression directly linked to the instability of their housing situation.

Mr. T was initially asked to share a hotel room when he presented as homeless. He refused and was provided with his own room in a hostel. He later moved to a temporary furnished flat but at each contact with the service reported that he felt depressed due to ongoing uncertainty around his housing.

Mr. T spent three hundred and thirty-five days in temporary accommodation. He obtained a secure tenancy via direct application having been supported to make bids on 'Homefinder' by his Integration Adviser.

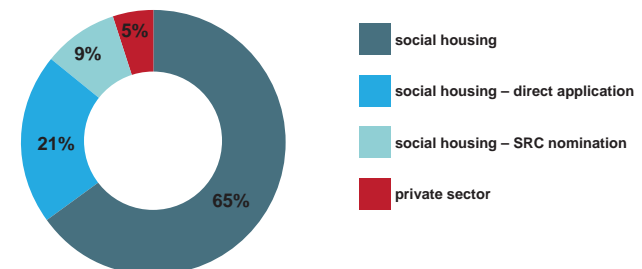
Living in temporary accommodation for extended periods can negatively impact upon refugees' ability to move forward in other areas of their integration journey. The costs of temporary accommodation to those not eligible for housing benefit are prohibitively high. Participating in any activity which could render someone ineligible for Housing Benefit, for example full time education or employment, may therefore be impossible for those without other resources to fall back on.

2.4 Routes to settled housing

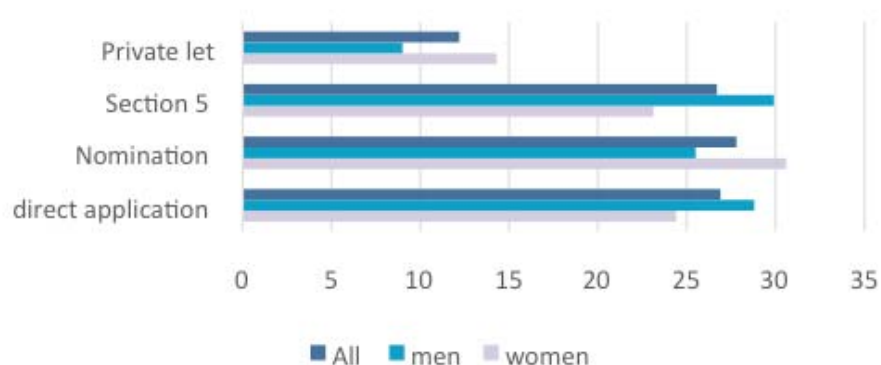
Our data shows that refugees favour social housing, with 95% of refugees who have been rehoused doing so in the social housing sector. This choice is likely to be motivated by affordability and security of tenure, factors which in turn can assist people to plan their finances more effectively, and so engage more fully in educational or employment opportunities.

Mr. A was assessed as job ready at the time of his first assessment by HIS adviser. However he spent two hundred and sixty-five days in temporary accommodation. During this time, he felt unable to take up an offer of work as a self-employed interpreter as he would have been unable to afford to pay for his hostel accommodation without a more secure income. Mr. A finally moved to a secure tenancy obtained via his own direct application and is now in full-time education.

Routes to secure housing



Number of weeks to secure housing



It would appear that direct applications to housing associations made by refugees themselves are as effective in attaining a move into secured tenancy as those made with the help of the local authority via Section 5 referrals¹⁷ (26.9 weeks direct and 26.7 weeks through the local authority). This is an indication both of the positive work of Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers in promoting different routes to access housing; and the increased self-agency of refugees. The fact that households headed by women appear to be re-housed quicker via both of these routes may be because women are more likely to head households with dependent children, and so to request two and three bedroom properties, which are less in demand currently than single bedroom homes.

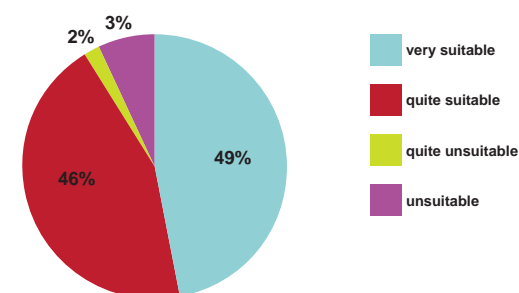
Private lets are the least preferred option. From focus group discussions with refugees who opted for housing in the private rented sector, we know that this choice was motivated by the attraction of not spending long periods in homelessness but participants have

shared regrets when they realised that the level of rent prevented them from accessing other opportunities, such as education.

2.5 Sustainability of housing solutions

A positive indicator that emerges from that data is that refugees who secure settled housing are likely to rate this housing highly in terms of its suitability and their satisfaction with it. As noted above, a substantial proportion of refugees will have obtained this tenancy through their own direct application, indicating a degree of resilience and self-sufficiency. Of the 66% of beneficiaries who were asked by their Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser about their satisfaction with this accommodation, 95% stated that they were satisfied with their housing within which 49% were very satisfied. This compares very favourably with responses given when people were asked the same question at the beginning of their engagement with the service when they were either still in asylum accommodation or temporary accommodation.

Satisfaction with settled housing



¹⁷ Section 5 referrals are priority referrals made by the local authority to social landlords on behalf of homeless households, Direct Applications are made by people in housing needs to social landlords in order to access their waiting list, and nominations are made by Scottish Refugee Council to social landlords with whom it has partnership agreements.

It is important to note that resilience in terms of housing solutions may involve beneficiaries exercising their own agency to refuse initial offers of settled housing, despite the disadvantages of remaining in temporary accommodation. Although refusals of housing offers may frustrate professionals, our analysis of individual cases indicates that it can be a positive indication of refugees' commitment to accessing sustainable housing and so may lead to fewer breakdowns of tenancies in the future.

Mr. S refused an offer of housing under section 5 because the property was a bedsit and he is hoping that his family will soon arrive under family reunion. Mr. S therefore felt that the property would not be suitable.

Two months later, Mr. S moved to a more suitable one-bedroom flat and continues to sustain that tenancy.

3. Access to Benefits

“Sarah’s financial situation has been much worse since the grant of status due to ongoing problems with child benefit and child tax credit claims...she has run out of money and has no electricity in the flat, she is relying on food banks for assistance...”

Key Findings

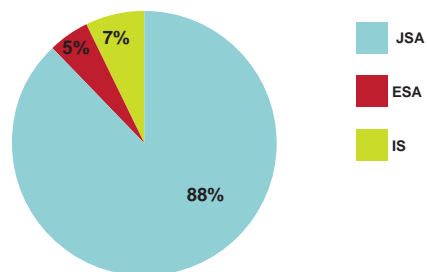
- ▶ 95.5% of new refugees who engaged with HIS (#844) received support from HIS to make their first benefit claim.
- ▶ New refugees are receiving their first benefit payment on average between 42 and 50 days after they received status resulting in 14 – 18 days of destitution.
- ▶ Women are most likely to experience longer delays as they are more likely to apply for Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credits, all of which have longer processing periods.
- ▶ Many new refugees do not receive a National Insurance Number (NINo) with their status documents. Adult dependants are never allocated a NINo at the point at which they are granted leave to remain.
- ▶ 39.5% of beneficiaries required extensive advocacy support from their Integration adviser to get a NINo allocated.
- ▶ 91% of the sanctions reported to the service happened within the first 6 months of being granted status.

3.1 Year Two – An Overview

From 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, HIS supported eight hundred and forty-four new refugees to make their first benefit claim after they were granted status (95.5% of total number of new refugees

who engaged with the service). Refugees are entitled to apply for mainstream benefits if they meet the eligibility criteria¹⁸. In a pattern similar to year one of the service, the vast majority of new refugees (88%) have claimed Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and must therefore fulfil obligations to actively seek employment.

Initial benefit claims



Our records show that, proportionally, women apply more to Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS) than men. 49% of ESA claims and 93% of the IS claims were made by women. Men are more likely to claim JSA, with 77% of the claims made by male-headed households and 23% by women. It is important to note that a few refugee women who claimed JSA had to do so because they lived with their husband or partner who was still in the asylum process. Where a partner is considered by

the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) as being able to care for the children (but still an asylum seeker and therefore ineligible for benefit) refugee women with children are required to apply for JSA and be actively seeking work. This has caused distress to women who are still breastfeeding their child. Normally a couple with children under the age of five would make a joint JSA claim and only one of them would be obliged to seek work. As the only long-term solution in such circumstances is a grant of leave to remain to the partner, Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers highlight these 'mixed household' cases to the Home Office and advocate for them to be resolved as quickly as possible in order that the family can move on together.

3.2 Delays in processing benefits

New refugees are entitled to apply for mainstream benefits as soon as they are granted leave to remain. They have a 'move on' period of twenty-eight days after notification of leave to remain before Home Office support stops. It is therefore essential that claims are made at the earliest opportunity to reduce the risk of a gap in support and resulting destitution. This is a risk recognised by statutory agencies and is one of the priorities for action for the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pension and Scottish Refugee Council in the Scottish Government's Strategy, [New Scots, Integrating Refugees in Scotland Communities](#).

Our data establishes that new refugees are **receiving their first benefit payment on average between forty-two and fifty days after they received status**; or between twenty-eight to thirty-three days from the day of the benefit claim. This means that they experience a gap with no financial support of between fourteen and eighteen days after the twenty-eight day 'move on' period runs out.

¹⁸ Eligibility criteria:

- JSA - not be in full-time education, be in England, Scotland or Wales, be available for work, be actively seeking work, work on average less than 16 hours per week.
- ESA - if illness or disability affects ability to work and if people are under State Pension age, not getting Statutory Sick Pay or Statutory Maternity Pay and you haven't gone back to work, not getting Jobseeker's Allowance.

* IS - between 16 and Pension Credit qualifying age, pregnant, or a carer, or a lone parent with a child under 5 or, in some cases, unable to work because you're sick or disabled, you have no income or a low income (your partner's income and savings will be taken into account), and working less than 16 hours a week.

Average time to process benefits claims

Before	No of days from status to claim	No of days from claim to payment	No of days from Status to payment
Jobseeker's Allowance	17	28	42
Employment Support Allowance	21	30	48
Income support	21	33	50

The average timescales also show that women are most likely to experience long delays as they are more likely to apply for Income Support and Employment Support Allowance. Child Benefits (CB) and Child Tax Credit (CTC)¹⁹, which are additional benefits applied for by households with children and are administered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), take much longer to process and this again will affect women more.

The impact on women is at two levels, direct financial hardship and also financial dependence on their husband or partner. A National

1/4/2014 to 31/03/2015	No Of Days From Status To First Payment	No Of Days From Claim to First payment	HMRC average ²⁰	HMRC target ²¹
Child Benefit	91	46	16.87	22
Child Tax Credit	139	77	23.31	22

¹⁹ Eligibility criteria:

- CB: Only one person can get Child Benefit for a child, who is responsible for a child under 16 (or under 20 if they stay in approved education or training) and lives in the UK.
- CTC: be responsible for a child aged under 16 or under 20 - if they're in approved education or training

Insurance Number (NINo) is allocated to the person who is the main asylum applicant, often the male head of household. There is a strong incentive to make the claim in the name of the spouse who has a NINo as this enables the claim to be tracked and processed more efficiently. This can be changed once the other spouse gets a NINo.

New refugees waited on ***average forty-six days for a Child Benefit claim to be processed and seventy-seven days for a Child Tax Credit claim to be processed***. It is concerning to compare this with the HMRC's own target of twenty-two days. As at December 2014, HMRC processed Child Tax Credit claims in just over twenty-three days and claims for Child Benefit in just under seventeen days.

3.3 Reasons for the delays

For many new refugees, delays are introduced by the fact that they only receive notification of their grant of status indirectly through their legal representative. Legal representatives do not always notify clients with urgency despite the fact that the twenty-eight day 'move on' period starts to run out on the day that the notification is deemed to have been issued by the Home Office. This means that someone presenting to HIS on the same day they receive their documents may already have 'lost' ten to fifteen days of their 'move on' period. New refugees may not realise the urgency themselves and neither make a benefit claim nor contact the HIS team immediately. Our records show that during year one, new refugees contacted the service on average twelve days after receiving status, but during year two this has increased to twenty five days by the last quarter of the year. This increased time lapse coincides with the transfer of Asylum Advice Services (formerly also provided by

²⁰ Data published in HMRC, Benefit and Credit Consultation Update, 26 February 2015, Issue 3.

²¹ Ditto

Scottish Refugee Council) to a different agency - along with a major reduction in capacity of these services²². Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers will ensure that a claim is submitted as soon as a new beneficiary joins the service.

Further major delays then occur in the processing of claims. The average time to process claims varies considerably between different benefits. DWP promotes online applications for JSA as the most efficient way for them to process the claim. However, this method is not available for people who do not have a National Insurance Number (NINo) when making the claim. Our records show that during year two of the service 39.5% of beneficiaries required extensive advocacy support from their Integration adviser to get a NINo allocated. It should be noted that the lack of a NINo doesn't hold up those accessing work, but does impact on those claiming benefits.

3.4 Impacts of delayed benefits

Case data and feedback from the Community of Practice during focus group discussions reinforce serious concerns about the impact of the financial hardship created by these delays in benefits. Frontline staff across the partnership report that beneficiaries' progress is severely disrupted by anxiety about money and the imperative to sort out benefits rather than attend classes. Anxiety can even cause new refugees to abandon their learning. Partners report multiple cases where these financial worries appear to be associated with serious deterioration in the mental health and wellbeing of particular beneficiaries.

The follow three cases studies extracted from the JCDB data illustrate the impact of delayed benefits:

Single mother with three children

- NINo delay – three months
- Total benefits delay – six months (Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit)
- Impact:
 - ▶ Had to rely on Social Services Crisis Assistance and charitable funds as only receiving £73/week to pay for food, clothing and utilities bills.
 - ▶ 44 interventions by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser for Child Benefit alone.

Single man with physical health problems as result of torture

- NINo delay – 2 ½ months
- Total benefits delay – 2 ½ months (Employment Support Allowance)
- Impact :
 - ▶ 16 interventions by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers until first payment made due to repeated confusion within DWP around issuing of NINo.
 - ▶ Beneficiary attending hospital appointments for severe head injury during this time – undue stress and frequent visits to Scottish Refugee Council offices extremely difficult for him.
 - ▶ Reliance on short term & charitable resources – Scottish Welfare Fund/ Refugee Survival Trust / Crisis Grant.

²² Discussed more fully in Section 10.6

Family of four (parents & two under-5's)

- Wife not issued with NINo – delay of four months
- Total benefit delay – delay of five months (Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit)
- Impact:
 - ▶ Family of four living for two months on single person's Jobseeker's Allowance of £73.10 / week for food, utilities and all other necessities e.g. travel, toiletries
 - ▶ 19 interventions by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser to resolve problems with NINo and benefits.

The work being done by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers on this matter is critical. Evidence from case records shows that even new refugees who had strong English skills and understood their entitlement to welfare benefits, had difficulties making a claim or suffered delays in receiving payment and had to seek help from Scottish Refugee Council advice services. In recognition of these difficulties DWP has provided Scottish Refugee Council with 'escalation routes' to help solve problems (contacts available only to agencies). With DWP's move to digitalisation and phone contact centres it is increasingly difficult for refugees to engage independently with its services. It is not unreasonable to assume that the 39.5% of beneficiaries who needed advocacy in relation to their NINo would not have been able to access to their benefit payments without the intervention of the Holistic Integration Service.

To further mitigate the impact of delays, Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers support refugees by applying for charitable

funds or to Crisis Grant from the Scottish Welfare Fund. Since July 2014, the Holistic Integration Service has succeeded in securing £8734.79 worth of Crisis Grants. This is an average of £174.70 per claim.

3.5 Analysis of the procedural problems with issuing NINo

How it should work in theory	How it works in practice
Receive status	Receive status
Home Office notifies DWP that NINo can be allocated and transfers personal information.	39.5% of new refugees required intensive advocacy from HIS to obtain a NINo
DWP allocates a NINo and sends to the Home Office.	No NINo allocated (for at least 39.5% of HIS beneficiaries)
Home Office notifies new refugees of their NINo at the same time as grant of status.	No NINo allocated (for at least 39.5% of HIS beneficiaries)
New refugees receive benefit as soon as 28 day 'move on' period finishes.	Refugees receive no financial support after Home Office support stops
	New refugees on JSA wait between 28 days after first claim (42 days after being notified of status)
	New refugees not eligible for JSA wait even longer

As shown above, many new refugees do not receive a NINo with their status documents, and adult dependants are never allocated a NINo at the point at which they are granted leave to remain. Where this is the case, advisers spend significant time phoning different sections of the DWP to track the process, find out who is dealing with the allocation, and inform the Benefit Delivery Centre when a NINo has been allocated. A further delay is created if the Home Office fails to generate a NINo based on the asylum application process, the DWP will require new refugees to attend a face to face interview before a NINo can be allocated. Due to cross-departmental miscommunication and/or administrative errors, this interview can also be significantly delayed.

Once all the evidence (including the NINo) is presented claims are processed and payment is received within 48 hours after the allocation of NINo. The DWP therefore usually appears to meet its target of 14 working days to process a benefit claim from the day they have all the evidence required. However, the NINo is often the last piece of evidence needed to process the claim – therefore causing the delay - and the allocation of this is the responsibility of DWP. The claimant's sole responsibility regarding the NINo allocation is to attend a NINo interview. As noted in the DWP report 'Asylum Seekers Transition to Mainstream Benefits Deep Dive Investigation Results and Recommendations'²³, the Average Actual Clearance Times (AACT) aspiration is 100% of NINo applications to be processed within 15 days of first claimant contact.

4. Sanctions

“It's not just actually being sanctioned itself, but even the fear of being sanctioned that causes huge anxieties amongst HIS beneficiaries.”

It was clear during year one of the service that new refugees were likely to be subject to benefit sanctions. Given their lack of security and access to resources this would be likely to cause serious problems. During year two, partners and the evaluation team have monitored HIS beneficiaries' experiences of sanctions as closely as possible. However we are aware that the experience of sanctions is likely to be under-reported as not all new refugees will report to a HIS partner when they have been sanctioned. Even those new refugees who do contact their Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser for advice have often not done so until their benefits have been stopped for some time and they are already in acute need.

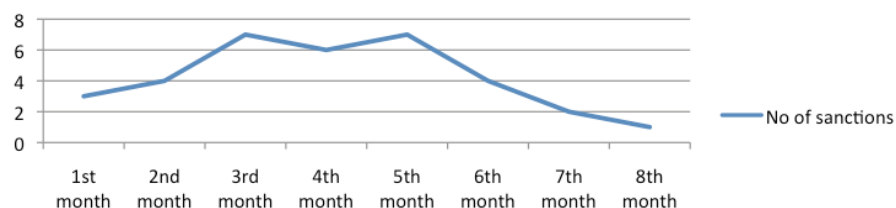
4.1 Year Two – An overview

Since the beginning of the delivery of the Holistic Integration Service, thirty four refugees have reported being sanctioned.

Our data on these cases shows that refugees are most vulnerable to sanctions within the first 6 months after being granted status. ***91% of the sanctions reported to the service happened within the first 6 months of being granted status and 65% of those sanctioned were beginners in English*** (in proportion to the English levels across the cohort). This suggests that refugees are not only vulnerable to sanctions because of communication problems but that sanctions are widely implemented despite misunderstandings of the conditionality of benefits.

²³ Distributed to members of the National Asylum Stakeholders Forum's Integration working group, July 2013.

No. of sanctions by months since status



4.2 Compliance with Jobseeker's Allowance

HIS intervenes at different levels in supporting refugees to meet their obligations as Jobseeker's Allowance claimants.

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers start explaining the process the first time that new refugees present to the service, and will spend more time explaining Jobcentre Plus role and JSA eligibility criteria when refugees attend their full assessment. Integration Advisers encourage jobseekers to agree to a Claimant Commitment that is personalised and realistic for them, and ensure that they understand what they commit to, record everything they do, and if they have limited English skills, understand the importance of completing activities other than ESOL, e.g. life skills course, volunteering. Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers will also tell new refugees about their right to ask for an interpreter when they engage with Jobcentre Plus.

ESOL tutors from Workers Educational Association Scotland and Glasgow Clyde College support refugees to complete their work books, and in accordance with the learner centred approach, include

welfare and Jobcentre Plus terminology in their courses to better prepare learners to engage with their DWP work coaches. Members of the HIS Community of Practice note that sanctions have an impact on the capacity of refugees to engage with HIS and other services, and that not only sanctions but the fear of being sanctioned has a negative impact on mental health. Front line staff of all the HIS partner organisations report that they feel more confident to support beneficiaries in managing JSA conditionality because they have worked closely to share knowledge and expertise to develop solutions to provide the best service.

The introduction of the English Language Requirement²⁴ (ELR) for Jobseeker's Allowance recipients increases the provision of ESOL to refugees who need it the most and therefore may be welcomed in some ways. However, as a result of the appointment of a single private provider (Ingeus) to deliver the mandatory provision under the ELR across Scotland, JSA recipients already accessing ESOL or other college course provision have had to withdraw from their courses to attend the mandatory DWP provision. Some refugees have been sanctioned for not attending mandated provision while they thought they met the conditionality by attending their regular classes. Unfortunately DWP provision is restricted to speaking and listening skills, and is therefore incompatible with mainstream provision in Scotland and Scotland's newly refreshed holistic ESOL Strategy.²⁵

²⁴ This is a mandatory ESOL provision. The private company Ingeus was contracted in November 2014 by DWP to provide ESOL to JSA claimants below Access 3. Provision started in January 2015.

²⁵ Education Scotland (2015) [Welcoming our learners: Scotland's ESOL Strategy 2015-20](#)

ACQUIRING KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT

5. Language & Education

“Speaking English is key to everything – it is our first concern... everyone!”

Key Findings

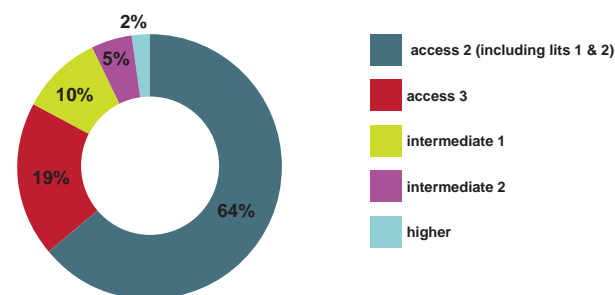
- ▶ 64% of beneficiaries assessed have English Language skills at ‘Access 2’ level or below. This means that they might be able to hold a basic conversation on a familiar topic, understand a basic notice or complete a basic form. However they would not be able to hold a conversation on a less familiar topic, nor write a simple text.
- ▶ New refugees rely on language and other courses for acquiring local cultural understandings and for making friends.
- ▶ 71% of new refugees arrive with no education beyond the equivalent of secondary schooling (of which 22% have only attended school up to primary level).
- ▶ Acquiring sufficient English language proficiency is an essential precursor to pursuing other educational goals.

A large majority of refugees come to Scotland with very little or no capacity in the English language. As a result they find it very difficult to navigate support systems and services and can feel very isolated from other people. HIS has capacity to provide some access to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes but this may not be enough to enable new refugees to acquire sufficient fluency and confidence. Our concern is to document the impact that lack of English capacity has on other aspects of integration. Further data on this will be gathered through individual interviews during year three.

5.1 Year Two – An overview

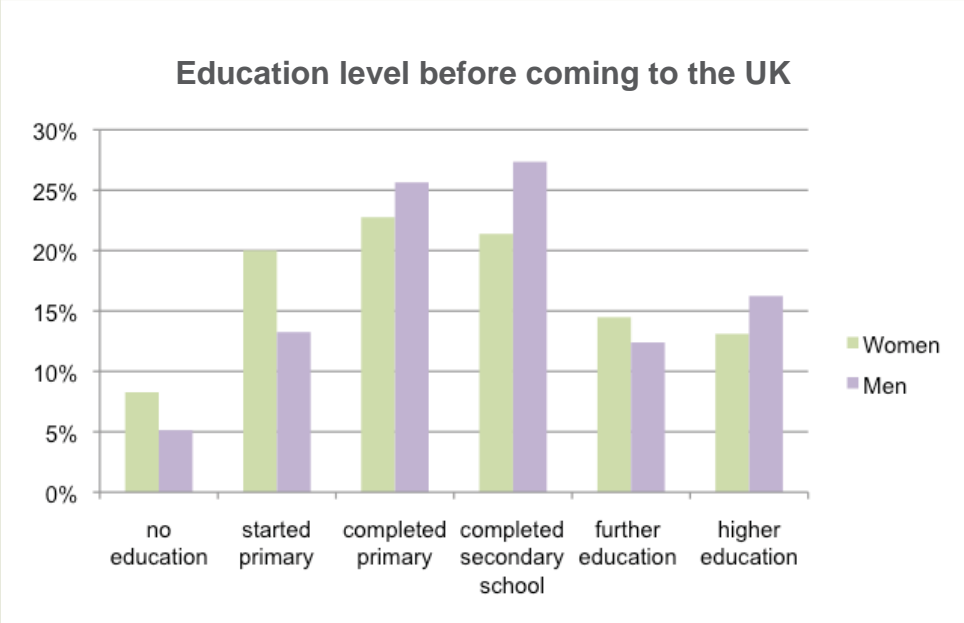
Language assessments were offered to all new refugees who presented for triage this year and as a result three hundred and sixty initial language assessments were carried out (74% of those completing a full assessment). Results – shown in the graph ‘ESOL levels’ – were similar to those reported in year one.

ESOL levels



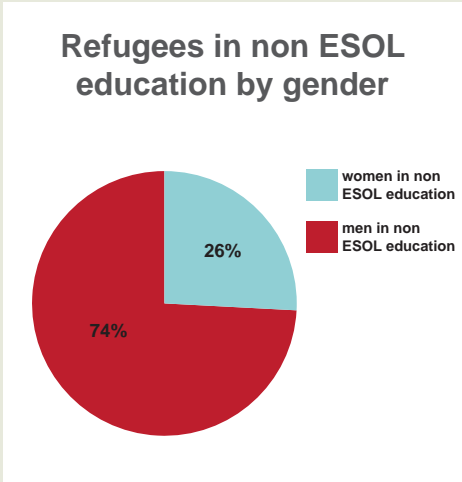
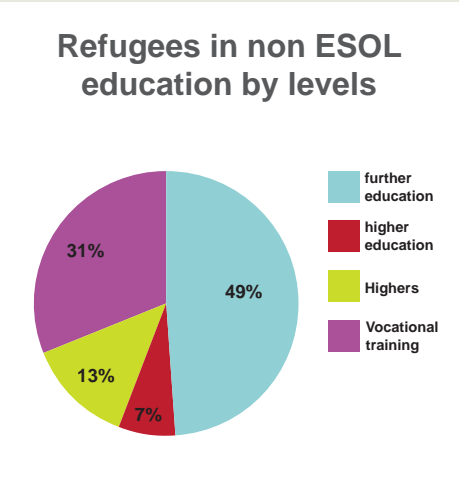
Approximately two thirds of beneficiaries assessed have skills at 'Access 2' level or below. This means that they might be able to hold a basic conversation on familiar topic, understand a basic notice or complete a basic form. However they would not be able to hold a conversation on a less familiar topic, nor write a simple text.

One hundred and sixty-three beneficiaries accessed ESOL classes at Workers Educational Association Scotland and eighty-two accessed courses at Glasgow Clyde College during this year (some of whom will have accessed both courses). As noted in our first report, it has proved difficult to capture progress in language learning as the available measures are not able to recognise the small improvements achieved by beginner learners. This problem is acknowledged across the ESOL sector.



Data on new refugees who engaged with HIS from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014 (see graph 'Education level before coming to the UK', total cohort: 379) shows that 28% of the refugee population arrive with the equivalent to further or higher education. However, 50% have only completed either primary or secondary school, and 22% have either had no education or only started primary school. Women are less likely to have had educational opportunities than men, with 28% not completing primary school. There appears to be more gender equality in further and higher education, with 27% of women and 28% of men having accessed education beyond school.

After engaging with HIS, thirty-nine beneficiaries (4.5%) in year two undertook educational courses other than ESOL. The majority (74%) were men. Just under half of these refugees were taking Further Education courses, with a further third following vocational courses. Of the remainder, 13% were studying for Scottish Higher exams and 7% studying at degree level.



5.2 New refugees' perspectives on language learning

During this year we have conducted focus group discussions with beneficiaries involved in different services provided by the partnership. In each case we have explored their concerns about the impact of English language competence on integration and their experiences of language learning. There is a strong consensus that the ability to use the English language is the key to everything:

“My family are relying on me – I can’t support them without English”

“If you can learn English you can gain money”

“If you go to a hospital appointment, you get embarrassed if you can’t explain your own medical problems”

“You don’t make Scottish friends if you don’t have English”

New refugees often express frustration that they do not have enough opportunities to practice their English with native speakers. They rely on classes not only for teaching input but also for practice in using the language. Feedback from beneficiaries suggests that they particularly value more applied teaching methods which enable them to focus on learning language skills immediately applicable to their lives. For example HIS partners report that they support refugees in their dealings with DWP by teaching relevant vocabulary. There is some evidence to suggest that new refugees in the HIS programme are struggling with the lack of continuity in ESOL provision. Workers Educational Association Scotland and Glasgow Clyde College have met on an ongoing basis to identify how to overcome barriers and promote seamless progression.

Mr W is a man in his mid-forties who is a native Arabic speaker. He attended Workers Educational Association Scotland ESOL classes very shortly after engaging with the HIS programme and found them very helpful. He then experienced a significant break before he was able to attend a college ESOL course. He reported that a gap in learning is very difficult, especially when you are older. He feels anxious that he is not able to look after his wife and family effectively with his current level of English.

The focus group data indicates that ESOL classes are a major source of social connections. For example when refugees were asked to plot the people that they meet regularly as friends and family it was clear that they meet many of the people who they consider to be friends at ESOL and other classes. These ‘bonding’ relationships are crucial to integration and will be explored with individuals in the final phase.

It is clear that ESOL courses are also an important source of cultural knowledge as course tutors are some of the few contacts that these new refugees have with established local people. Learners highlighted the value of outings for learning about how to behave in public (e.g. “Scottish people don’t like you to talk too loudly on a bus”) and also how to find things in shops or learning about the history of Scotland at the museum. ESOL tutors are very conscious of the crucial role that they need to play in explaining the sanctions system and in supporting completion of diaries for JSA claimants. This is undertaken as an integral part of the ESOL curriculum in the HIS partnership.

5.3 New refugees' perspectives on educational opportunities

Some new refugees have had their education interrupted by their flight and are keen to continue. Many see gaining UK qualifications as essential to getting a job in line with their skills – even though they may already have all the relevant qualifications, these may not be recognised either officially or unofficially by employers. They face the extra challenges of studying in a second language. Beneficiaries have argued that ESOL classes are essential to support educational progression and progression into work. However, they also feel that,

“The Job Centre puts pressure on you to get a job rather than improve your English”

Whilst gaining employment can improve English language skills, it seems that there is inconsistent recognition by DWP of the value of ESOL and other education courses in supporting

employability outcomes. This is despite its own new mandatory ESOL requirements. New refugees often cannot afford to carry on with studying because full time students are not eligible to JSA nor Housing Benefit.

Beneficiaries from Bridges Programmes shared the difficulties they have experienced in making decisions about which courses to study. Scottish Refugee Council with Glasgow Clyde College, Workers Educational Association Scotland and University of Strathclyde ran a very popular community conference at Strathclyde University for refugees where they invited a broad range of education providers to engage. This has contributed to making information about courses more widely available. The data suggests that beneficiaries would also benefit from access to informal information about education and qualifications in the UK labour market setting.



WEA Scotland ESOL class – Photo courtesy of WEA Scotland

Mr A from West Africa hopes to set up his own business in Scotland. One year ago he started an HND in Business Administration. However he now feels that this qualification will not be as valuable as a degree, so is considering applying to transfer to university. Ultimately he is looking for qualifications that will support his success in business.

6. Employment

“I don’t want to feel a foreigner – just a normal citizen. Any job will do, I want to manage for myself like British people do.”

Key Findings

- ▶ 7% of refugees who engaged with HIS since May 2013 gained paid employment within an average time of 220 days after receiving status.
- ▶ The largest numbers in employment were from the People’s Republic of China (#10), followed by Eritrea (#8) and Pakistan (#6).
- ▶ Women eligible for employment are underrepresented in the numbers successful in gaining jobs (20%).
- ▶ Half of the new refugees work in either catering (34%) or cleaning (16%).

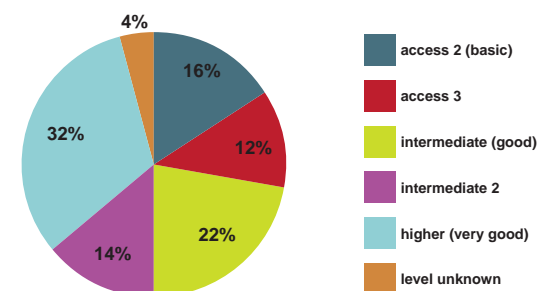
Only twelve beneficiaries had secured jobs by the end of year one. During year two we set out to analyse the characteristics of those who had jobs, and to explore beneficiaries’ experiences of preparing for and finding work.

6.1 Year 2 – an overview

Since the beginning of the Holistic Integration Service, we know of fifty new refugees who secured employment - this is 7% of the refugees who engaged with HIS since May 2013. The average time taken for them to secure employment was two hundred and twenty days (more than seven months) after they received status.

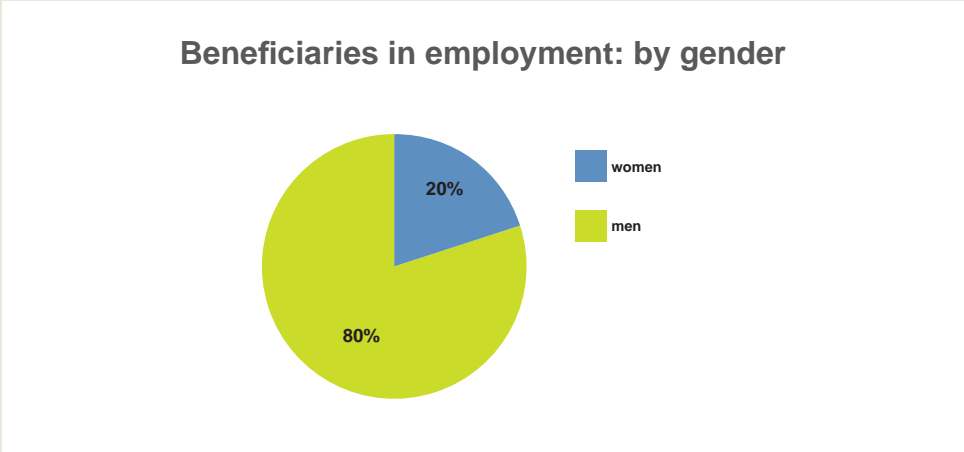
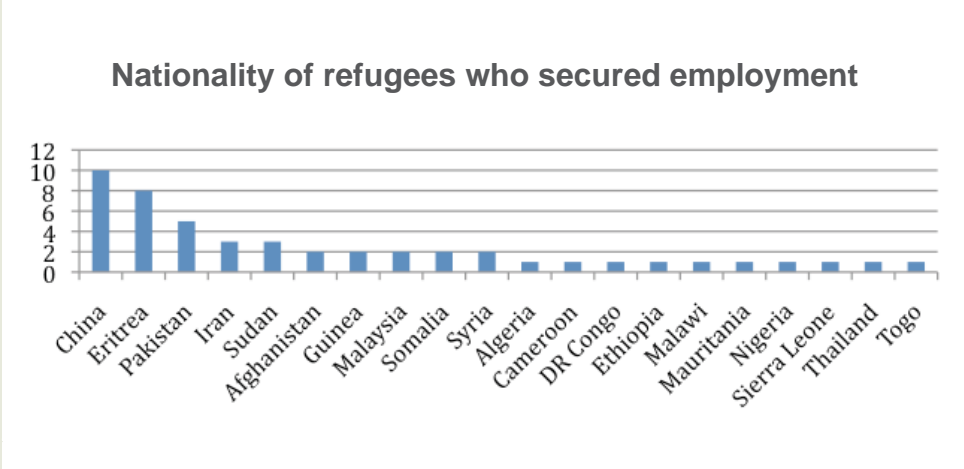
It is clear that people with better English skills are more likely to secure employment as 80% of refugees who secured work were above Access 3²⁶. It is interesting to note that this same group meet the agreed English-language criterion for referral to employability services within HIS “(minimum level of Access 3 in speaking and listening).

Beneficiaries in employment: by language levels



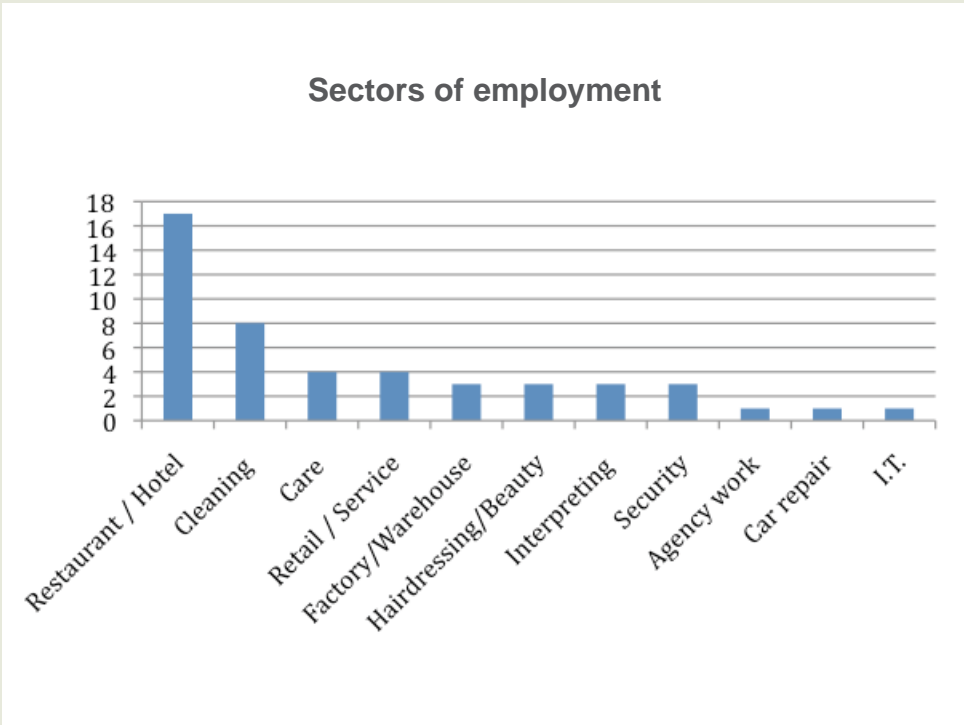
²⁶ Note – not everybody in the sample had their English level assessed by a qualified ESOL assessor, so this includes data based on information in case notes (e.g. 'Requires interpreter').

Conversely, Chinese and Eritrean nationals are the most successful nationality groups, despite limited English skills. 39% of Chinese and Eritrean nationals were only beginners in English; this is more than double the proportion for the full sample.



Women are underrepresented in employment, even when only women eligible for JSA (and therefore considered to be available for work) are included.

The type of employment that refugees secure is most likely to be low skilled, low paid and insecure, for example with temporary or zero hours contracts.



The following table indicates the language levels of those employed in different sectors:

Language levels in sectors of employment	
Restaurant / Hotel	All levels
Cleaning	Access 2 to Fluent
Care	Fluent
Retail / Service	From Access 3 to Fluent
Factory/Warehouse	Access 2 and 3
Hairdressing/Beauty	Intermediate 1 and 2
Interpreting	Intermediate 2 to Fluent
Security	From Access 3 to Fluent
Agency work	Intermediate 2
Car repair	Intermediate 1
I.T.	Intermediate 2

Case Data recorded for the Chinese and Eritrean refugees who obtained employment offers two distinct visions of new refugees' journeys towards work.

6.2 Chinese refugees in employment

Gender & family status: One of the most striking aspects of the data regarding new refugees from China is the relatively high number of women who gained employment as a proportion of the total. Although, overall, only 20% of the new refugees recorded as having obtained paid employment were women, this proportion rose to 50% in the Chinese sample. (As this data only includes 'main applicants', generally a male head of household, the number of Chinese women employed is likely to be under-represented.) Moreover, despite the potential constraints placed upon accessing employment by caring responsibilities, all 10 of the new Chinese refugees, regardless of gender, were recorded as living with a partner and one or more children. This profile is distinct from the more general cohort of HIS beneficiaries, of whom 81% are recorded as living in households without dependent children.

Length of time in UK: The Chinese refugees in this sample had generally been in the UK for significant periods of time prior to being granted status. Three had arrived in 2010, two in each of 2009 and 2008, with the remaining three arriving in 2004, 2006 and 2007 respectively.

Community connections: 100% of the Chinese refugees in this sample were employees of, or started their own Chinese restaurants or takeaways after being granted status. We therefore looked more closely at our data on their social connections. Of the ten Chinese refugees who obtained employment, eight provided HIS with baseline data on their level of social connectedness. All of these eight noted that, at the start of interaction with HIS, they spoke or met up with friends or family in the UK more than twice a week. This compared with more variable responses when asked about links with wider communities, as represented by a question

about their sense of belonging to their local area. Although this data can, at this stage, be indicative only, it could support a hypothesis that new Chinese refugees have a distinct journey towards employment, forged at least in part by strong links with existing East Asian communities.

6.3 Eritrean refugees in employment

Gender & family status: In contrast to the Chinese sample described above, all of the Eritrean new refugees who obtained employment were men. Given that 29% of Eritrean service beneficiaries in this period were women, this is a marked under-representation of Eritrean women. Once again, in contrast to the Chinese example, only two of the Eritrean men (25%) who gained employment were living in households with dependent children, with 75% living as single people in the UK.

Length of time in the UK: Eritrean refugees who gained employment had been in the UK for a far shorter period than their Chinese counterparts – all were recorded as having arrived in either 2013 or 2014.

Community connections: Social connections data indicates similar levels of connectedness to friends and family in the UK to that noted amongst the Chinese cohort. Yet none the jobs obtained by Eritrean refugees were noted as being within Eritrean run organisations. It is therefore harder to perceive evidence of an interaction between community links and employment prospects. A more detailed exploration of individual refugees' journeys to employment might shed further light upon this.

6.4 New refugees' experiences of seeking employment

We conducted focus group discussions with beneficiaries considered ready to prepare for work who had participated in Bridges Programmes courses and work experience placements. When we asked them what they had most appreciated about the programme, they ranked key job search skills (such as CV writing and interview practice) equally highly with making friends and sharing experiences with other refugees. Several commented on how much they appreciated the ambience of the project and the supportive relationships with project staff.

Lost time and track record: New refugees were very aware that their experiences of flight had created a gap in their employment history and opportunity to gain experience. They reported a loss of confidence, and a concern that their age would be a disadvantage in the job market in addition to the obvious disadvantages of lack of cultural familiarity and poorer language skills. As one man in his mid-forties remarked starkly, "Employers want someone young."

Mr A was seven years in the asylum process before getting a positive decision. As an asylum seeker he was not allowed to work, "...you exist, but you are not living..." During that time he witnessed the economic recession and recognises that there are far fewer job opportunities now than there were when he first arrived.

Volunteering and Employer references: Beneficiaries were convinced that, "Employers won't look at you until you have experience." Most reported that they had applied for 'hundreds' of jobs, but very rarely even hear anything back or been shortlisted.

For some this convinced them that they have to get any job, irrespective of their skills, qualifications or previous experience in order to break through into the UK labour market. All participants agreed that volunteering is very valuable because it gives you experience of the workplace. They knew of people who had got a paid job as a result of a voluntary placement. They agreed that a voluntary placement would enable them to get an employer reference.

Before fleeing his home country Mr M had worked as an HR manager in a small company and had nearly completed his degree. Since arriving in Glasgow he has undertaken multiple volunteering roles including one that he arranged himself with the Jobcentre Plus team. He gave up an HND course in IT & Business Management at Glasgow Clyde College in order to further his employment prospects during which time he was reliant on Jobseeker's Allowance. He now has a paid job in Customer Services with a hardware outlet and is gaining experience of the retail sector in Scotland

Dilemmas about how much to commit to 'ideal' career:

Beneficiaries pointed out the difficulties they face in trying to decide how to set and pursue their own employment goals. They felt pressure from DWP simply to get a job – irrespective of their professional background. Some also put pressure on themselves to get into any job, whilst at the same time being aware that their own sense of self-respect was very closely allied to the work that they do. One new refugee, a former professional wrestler said, “You can't feel good about yourself ...” (if you are not working in your own professional area of expertise).

On the other hand, people felt that it was a big risk to spend time in retraining or education. This might take several years, and refugees recognised that, “It is harder to study when you are older, also harder when not studying in own language.” One beneficiary was worried about whether the course he is doing will turn out to be the right one to get him into work but argued, “I can't risk failing!”

Mr D was hoping to qualify as a medical doctor in the UK. As he enquired about this, he discovered more and more qualifications that were required before he could enrol. He has therefore started an HND course in Biological Science hoping that this will enable him to study medicine eventually. He says he is determined to see it through no matter how long it takes, and even though he is already in his early thirties. At the same time, he is looking out for jobs and says if he were offered a job he would take it even if it meant he had to give up studying.



Community Conference Education – Photo by Iman Tajik

HEALTH & WELL BEING

7. Health & Mental health

“We have so much to worry about, how can a refugee be in good health...?”

Key Findings

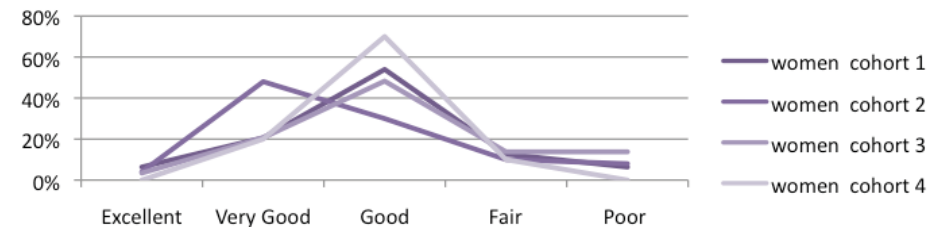
- ▶ 34% of HIS beneficiaries reported health problems.
- ▶ Just over 89% of new refugees throughout the year were already registered with a GP.
- ▶ HIS beneficiaries and front line staff consistently report concerns about refugees' undiagnosed poor mental health.

This year we have continued to monitor GP registration and collect data on beneficiaries' self-ratings on physical and mental health. In line with wide recognition of the challenges to mental health experienced by refugees, we have explored the relationships between mental health and well being and other aspects of integration. These issues will be studied in greater depth through individual interviews during year three.

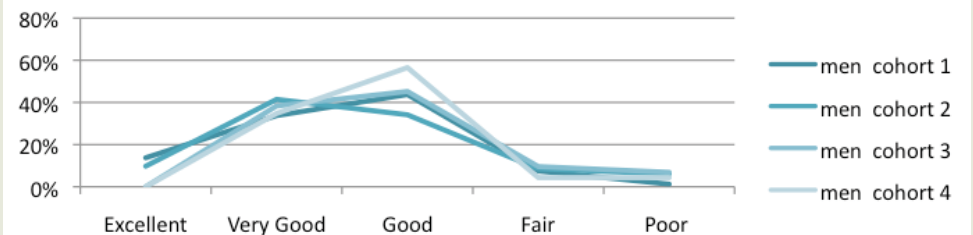
7.1 Year Two – An overview

27% of new refugees who accessed the Holistic Integration Service from 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 reported that they suffered from a diagnosed mental or physical health problem. In addition, health issues were mentioned in the case notes of a further 5% of beneficiaries – amounting to a total of 34% reporting health problems.

Physical health self-assessment

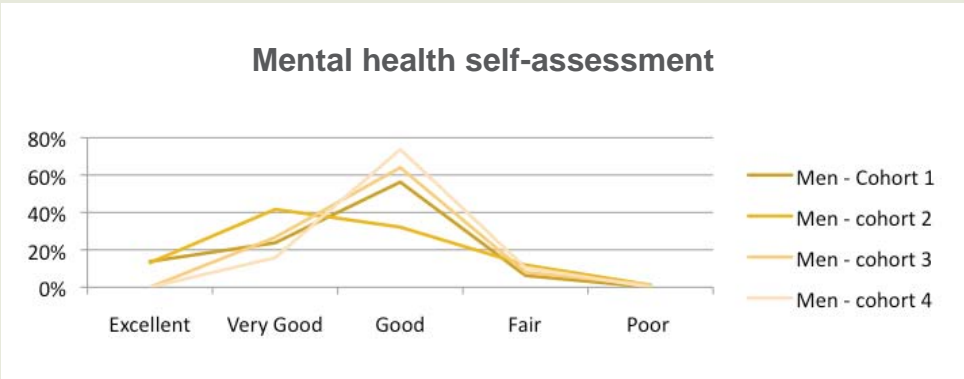
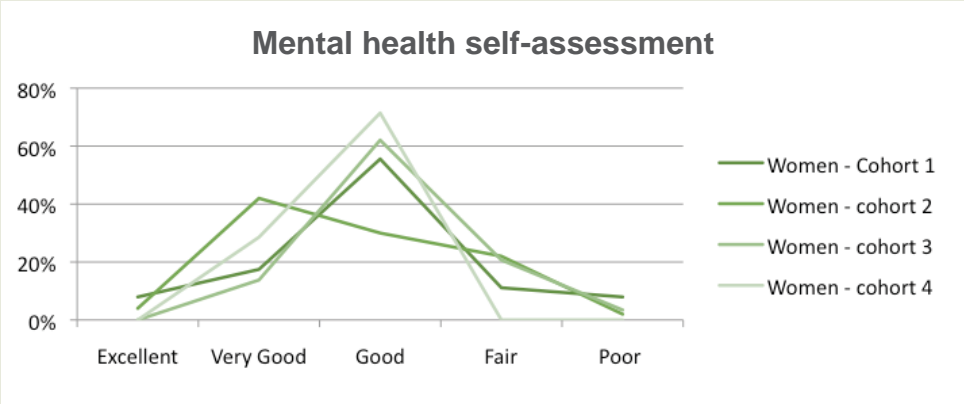


Physical health self-assessment



Case data shows that most beneficiaries rated their physical health as either 'good' or 'very good' at initial assessment. Men were slightly more likely to rate their physical health as 'very good' than women.

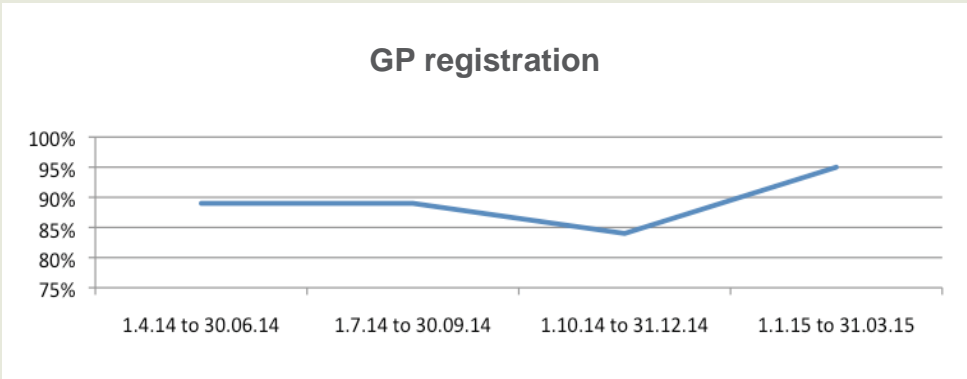
Average self-ratings for mental health are slightly lower than those for physical health, with fewer beneficiaries rating their mental health as 'very good'.



As the HIS programme does not provide professional medical support these responses can only be indicative. Our focus is to explore new refugees' access to health care and the impact of health issues on other aspects of integration.

7.2 Access to health care

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers will always ask if new refugees are registered with a GP, and our data shows that levels of registration are very high. This demonstrates the effectiveness of Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board's 'Asylum and Health Bridging Team'. This team completes a health assessment with every new asylum seeker dispersed to Glasgow and allocates a GP practice where the newly arrived asylum seeker can go and register. Advisers find that some asylum seekers fail to register because they have moved through the asylum process very quickly (this might account for the dip in registrations October – December 2014 which coincided with a peak in numbers of positive decisions). Others have not realised the importance of GP registration for accessing health care in the future.



An analysis of JCDB case records reveals only three recorded cases where advisers or HIS partners were required to provide significant intervention to enable beneficiaries to access healthcare. These cases concerned giving information about free eye tests to an otherwise resilient individual, phoning a beneficiary's GP to advocate for the provision of an interpreter and providing a British Red Cross volunteer to accompany a beneficiary who had been having difficulty attending medical appointments.

7.3 New refugees' health and well being experiences

Whilst beneficiaries may not either have or disclose diagnosed mental health conditions when they engage with the HIS programme, it is clear from feedback from members of the Community of Practice (frontline staff team across HIS partners) and data from focus group discussions that a substantial number of new refugees who engage with the service struggle with what might be termed 'sub-clinical' mental health problems. For example, beneficiaries of the British Red Cross service (for new refugees with 'complex' circumstances) were asked to produce individual timelines indicating the fluctuations in their mood from before receiving status. Consistent patterns emerged showing a dramatic emotional dip shortly after receiving status which generally endured for several months, and was often followed by further negative periods. Reasons given for these low spirits included: health problems; move from an emergency furnished flat to a hostel (which is more expensive, but life is more restricted and you can't cook your own food); pressure from Jobcentre Plus to find work immediately; family separation; loneliness.

Other studies have shown that refugees' mental health is undermined by multiple anxieties and insecurities about their current lives exacerbated by social isolation. ²⁷New refugees in

the HIS programme confirmed this picture, giving examples of the circumstances which had helped them to feel better such as the hope of family reunion(x2); finding a good place to live (x3); getting help with access to college; starting to play sport.

7.4 Integration and health

Data from focus group discussions with both beneficiaries and our Community of Practice indicated links between mental health and all aspects of integration:

Integration & Mental health

Health: Physical ill health and reduced mobility can lead to social isolation and depression

Housing: "Temporary accommodation has a big psychological effect. It stops you from emerging..."

Language: "I can't support my family if I can't speak English"

Education: "I can't risk failing."

Employment: If you can't get a job that matches your skills and qualifications ... "you don't feel good about yourself."

Benefits: Advisers and tutors have shared concerns regarding impact on mental health caused not only by experiences of benefits sanctions but the fear of being sanctioned.

Social connections: "I'm not used to being alone; I am used to being part of a big family"

Independent agency: "Many people stay inside their house. You have to keep outside the house and busy all the time!"

²⁷ Strang & Quinn 2014 <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/strang-and-quinn-2014-integration-or-isolation-mapping-social-connections-and-well-being-amongst>

Analysis of case data showed how beneficiaries' physical health problems have created social isolation which has then led to mental health problems.

Mrs R is a single lady who suffers from arthritis. As a result of her mobility problems, she has been confined to her flat and her social connections have reduced since she first got refugee status. She is eligible for ESA but finds that this is not enough and she has got into debt. She worries a lot about money and has continued to be supported by HIS with advice and support to increase her access to services and social connections.

Further investigation is needed to understand the extent of such undiagnosed poor mental health amongst new refugees and the impact on all other aspects of integration.

8. Independent Agency

“I hope to do something to help my community, but at the moment I am trying to sort out my own problems.”

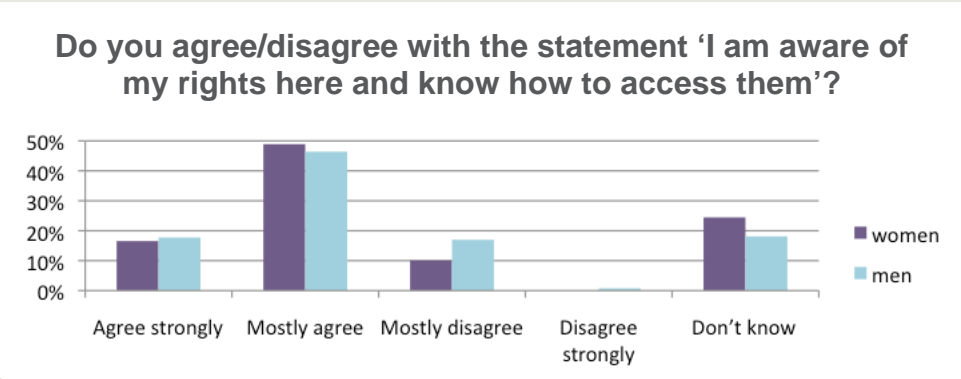
Key finding

- Over 60% of new refugees either agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware of their rights and know how to access them.

The Holistic Integration Service recognises that in order for new refugees to feel at home and build new integrated lives in Scotland it is imperative that they are able and confident to act independently, identifying and pursuing their own choices and priorities. Such ‘independent agency’ is difficult to capture in case data but will be explored through individual interviews in year three.

8.1. Year Two – An overview

Beneficiaries were asked about their awareness of their rights in the initial full assessment. Around 20% of those asked did not feel able to answer the question. Of those who did answer the question **55% – 60% either agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware of their rights and know how to access them.**



This data is supplemented by information from focus group discussions where beneficiaries talked about the ways that they have exercised independent agency. In particular several beneficiaries talked about the value of playing sport which can create opportunities to mix with local Scottish people, and informal as well as formal volunteering.

Mr P started to tend the small garden around the property where he was staying in temporary accommodation. He made many friends that way and everyone loved the way he transformed the garden – they didn't want him to leave!

Others gave examples of circumstances that undermine independent agency with poor English language being the most common reason, along with ill health.

“I’m not able to do much because my English language isn’t that great and I have medical problems. So I am concentrating on getting help through BRC”

9. Social Connections

“Mehdi has good social connections which are really assisting his integration in Glasgow. He takes part in various events, volunteers, attends college and is happy with life in Scotland”

“I’m not used to being alone; I am used to being part of a big family”

Key findings

- ▶ New refugees report deterioration in their sense of belonging as a result of moving to settled accommodation in new neighbourhoods.

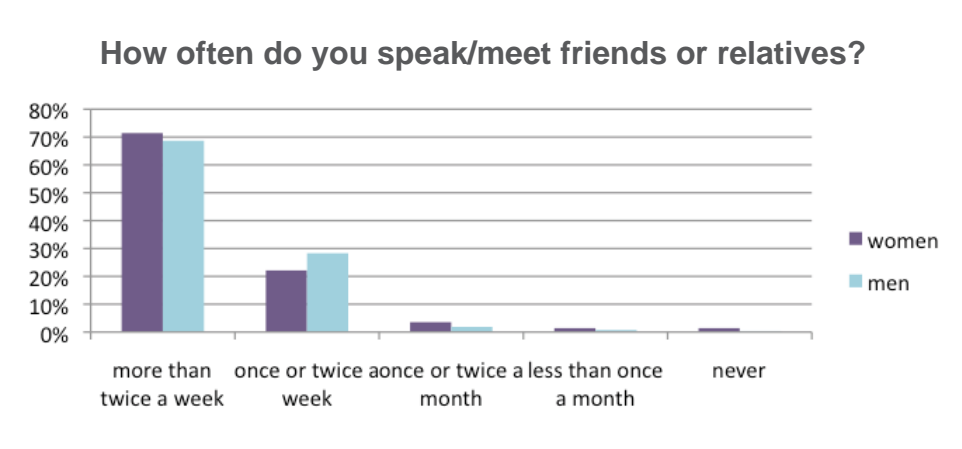
- ▶ Case data shows that new refugees vary in their priorities and expectations about their level of contact with others from the same national background.
- ▶ HIS beneficiaries report that they rely heavily on their engagement with the service for making friends and connections with Scottish people.

Evidence suggests that whilst integration depends on building social connections, new refugees can be very isolated and lacking in close relationships ('bonds') and lacking in knowledge of and access to services.²⁸In section 5 above, we offer some initial observations about possible links between social connections and employment. More work will be required in year three to fully understand the interplay between social connections and other integration domains.

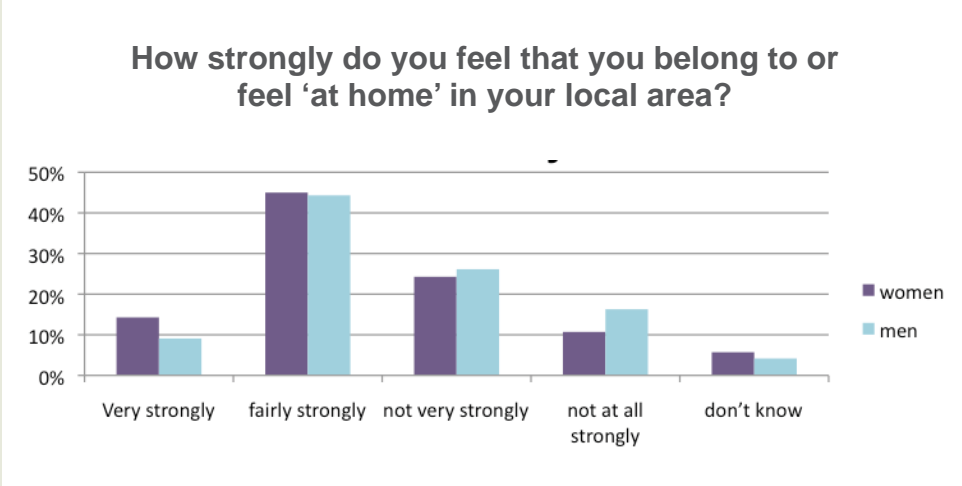
9.1. Year Two – Refugees' assessments of their social connections

Since late 2013 Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers have been using their casework management system to record standard responses to questions that unpack key elements of new refugees' social connections. The first question, about contact with family and friends, examines social bonds; the second, about access to services, looks at social bridges; the third, focussing on feeling at home in the local area, examines refugees' sense of belonging. Charts, showing responses to each of these questions at the time of refugees' first full assessment by gender, are on the following two pages.

Although our data indicate generally high levels of social connectedness, it is important to note two caveats. Firstly, the charts do not provide a full picture of changes in social connections over time. While people who rate their social connectedness as low initially will usually demonstrate some improvement over time, factors including poor health, or moving home may subsequently undermine a refugee's social connectedness. Secondly, there can be significant variation in responses across the four individual questions – for example, some refugees may rate their social bonds very highly, whilst continuing to feel that they do not 'belong' in their local area. The case examples given underneath each chart illustrate some of these complexities.



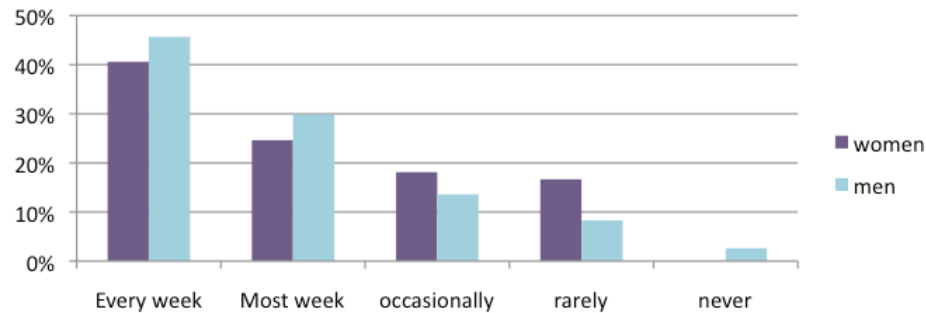
Mrs. M reported initially that she met with friends more than twice a week. However she reported at her final review that her worsening physical health problems mean that she cannot leave the house as often as she would like and so now sees her friends infrequently.



Ms O has a strong network of family and friends in Glasgow. However, her sense of belonging to her local area declined over time following her move to permanent accommodation in an area of the city where she felt unsafe due to antisocial behaviour in the neighbourhood.

Ms H said that she felt very strongly at home in her local area when she was first granted status. However, six months later, having been moved to temporary accommodation in another area, her sense of belonging had declined and she noted that she also felt isolated from friends as she struggled to pay for transport to visit them.

Frequency of access to local services



Mr. A indicated at his initial assessment that he had weak social connections in relation to contact with friends, sense of belonging, access to local services and understanding of rights. Six months later, he noted that he was able to access the services he wanted every week and was in regular contact with friends and family. During this time Mr. A attended ESOL classes regularly and engaged with employability services - indicating the interplay between different integration domains.

Even where service beneficiaries appear to enjoy strong bonds with others and engage well within the HIS programme of activities, some may continue to experience an underlying sense of social isolation and lack of belonging.

Mr M. is very outgoing and whilst attending a HIS employability programme enjoyed good relationships with project staff and clients. He showed strong personal agency and created volunteering opportunities for himself and mobilised others. Although he was therefore perceived by project staff as being well connected, when asked about the biggest difficulty he faced in life in Scotland, he stated, "I feel alone. I don't even have someone I can call a 'near' friend".

Data on the social relations enjoyed by new migrants gathered during Glasgow-wide Go Well study shows a strong correlation between time spent living in an area, and improvement in social cohesion measures such as social contacts and social support: "For each additional year in the area, respondents were 7% and 13% more likely to talk to and know their neighbours respectively."²⁹ It may therefore be unrealistic to expect HIS beneficiaries, some of whom will move to settled accommodation only half way through their engagement with the programme, to report significant improvements in their social connections within 12 months.

The impact of gender and family status upon self-ratings of social connectedness will also require more analysis. For example, it appears that women rate social bonds highly, but feel less confident than men in accessing services. The reasons for this, and other variations which may emerge, merit further investigation.

9.2. Different models of what people are looking for in community

“I’m a refugee. I’m looking for people to make me feel at home”

Our case data and focus group discussion data show that refugees have different expectations and hopes for the types of connection they will make in Scotland. For some new refugees, links with a community from their country of origin appear to be a deciding factor when making their long term plans. This can either act as anchor, keeping them in Scotland or a reason to move away because they perceive that they will have more community support (often linked with better employment prospects) elsewhere.

Abel initially reported good mental health and relatively strong social bonds with friends and relatives. However he began to feel increasingly socially isolated and decided to move to a town in England where there is strong Church community from his country of origin. Two months after moving to England, his Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser conducted a six month review by phone. He assessed his social connections as being far stronger, particularly in terms of his sense of belonging to his area and ability to access community services and organisations.

In contrast, other refugees note specifically that they do not wish to have any contact with other people from their country of origin. This may be because they want to focus on learning English and so would prefer to spend time with English speakers; because of past experiences of discrimination or social censure; or more generally

because of a wish to move on from the refugee experience towards ‘normality’³⁰.

Mrs. M. reported very low levels of social connectedness at her initial assessment. Although she has now engaged in a multitude of educational courses and accesses services confidently, she has repeatedly stated that she does not wish to make connections with people from her country of origin due to bad experiences prior to her asylum claim.

Three months after his grant of status, Mr. S. reported that he never had contact with friends or family in the UK. His Integration Adviser noted that he did not want to meet with people from his home country as “he wants to speak English not Arabic so he can improve his life and integrate into Scottish society”.

9.3. Role of HIS partners in promoting social connections

As many of the case vignettes above illustrate, improved social connections can be a core benefit from participation in activities across the HIS partnership that focus on integration’s ‘functional factors’ such as English language acquisition and employability.³¹ ESOL classes provide a forum for meeting others, forging new friendships and tapping into the broader cultural knowledge of their teachers and classmates to learn about non-standard curricular subjects such as ‘Glasgow English’. There are indications that some

³⁰ Mulvey, 2013

³¹ Kearns & Whitely, 2015

new refugees feel that their links with project staff in employability, advice and ESOL organisations also improve their social connections, although this may raise concerns about maintaining professional boundaries, and the unequal power balance inherent in such relationships. As with so many other aspects of the HIS

programme, the strength of the service rests upon a recognition of the inter-relatedness of work across the various integration domains and professionals' and refugees' commitment to promoting a truly holistic view of refugee integration.



WEA Scotland ESOL Class – Photo Courtesy of WEA Scotland

SECTION C: THE SERVICE

THE SERVICE

10. The Service

10.1. What is the HIS programme trying to achieve?

The Holistic Integration Service promotes:

- ▶ Early Intervention
- ▶ Prevention
- ▶ Sustainability

Through:

- ▶ Applying the 'Resilience-Vulnerability' typology
- ▶ Working in Partnership

The year one evaluation report³² explored the set-up of the HIS service, the emerging roles of partners and approach to collaboration. This interim report on year two has begun to throw light on beneficiaries' integration pathways including the roles that different aspects of the HIS programme have played. This section will briefly reflect on the extent to which the HIS programme has delivered according to the core principles which guided the design.

10.2. Early intervention and prevention

We have seen that the vast majority of HIS beneficiaries need early intervention to prevent their experiencing acute difficulties in their own integration pathway. As we have discussed, the two immediate and pressing issues that confront new refugees are that of finding appropriate housing once they can no longer stay in their Home Office provided accommodation; and secondly that of successfully applying for – and receiving - the benefits to which they are entitled.

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers support beneficiaries to ensure access to temporary accommodation – investing time in following up beneficiaries' applications where a beneficiary is not able to do so themselves (for example due to poor English language skills). They subsequently advise beneficiaries of their housing options and of the implications of the available choices (for example between the private versus social sector) at the earliest opportunity. In addition Scottish Refugee Council has negotiated a small number of direct nomination agreements with a few housing providers which are used to house beneficiaries with complex needs. In Section 2 we note that HIS beneficiaries are finding secure accommodation in less time than the population in general – evidence of the effectiveness of the service in providing early intervention.

Similarly, at the first meeting with a new refugee, Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers will check to see if the beneficiary has managed to submit an application for benefits. Clearly eligibility for benefit support is a right granted to new refugees on receipt of status. As such it should be possible for all those eligible for Benefits to access support without the help of a third party such as the Holistic Integration Service. As we have seen, this is not the case, even refugees who can demonstrate that they are otherwise

³² http://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/assets/8576/Holistic_Integration_Service_-_year_1_evaluation_report.pdf

‘resilient’ and capable of effective independent agency struggle to access benefits without experiencing a gap in support. Intervention from the HIS service is demonstrably essential in preventing and mitigating acute financial hardship for most new refugees at some point. Scottish Refugee Council Integration advisers intervene at multiple levels including supporting benefit applications, applying for crisis grants, providing information about other sources of help such as food banks, spending time explaining the role of Jobcentre Plus and the conditionality beneficiaries must meet to mitigate the risk of sanction. Tutors from Workers Educational Association Scotland, Glasgow Clyde College and Bridges Programmes also play a key role in the prevention of sanctions by supporting refugees to complete their job search log book (known as: ‘My Work Plan Booklet’). ESOL classes include Welfare and Jobcentre Plus terminology to their course so refugee learners are better prepared to engage with their DWP work coach.

It is clear that much of the work of the HIS service contributes to prevention, and enables beneficiaries to avoid the development of more serious difficulties. Early language assessment provided by Workers Educational Association Scotland when new refugees first engage with the service (see year 1 report for details³³) is useful in itself as independent evidence of language competence. HIS beneficiaries have quick access to designated ESOL courses³⁴ – although they still experience gaps when moving from one ESOL provision to another. HIS beneficiaries are generally able to join courses at Bridges Programmes as soon as they are otherwise ready to benefit (i.e. have good enough language skills plus other aspects of life settled enough for them to be able to engage effectively). As we have seen, accessing paid employment is very hard, and this does not just apply to new refugees. The HIS service promotes volunteering and provides supported placements to Bridges Programmes participants. New refugees see work

placements as one of the very few ways open to them to get a reference from an employer which is so essential to securing work in UK society.

Our records indicate that the early intervention by the Health Bridging Team is very effective in ensuring high levels of GP registration. The HIS programme staff support this work by looking out for serious health problems amongst beneficiaries and encouraging and facilitating access to health services on the few occasions where this has been appropriate. Feedback from the HIS programme partners and beneficiaries raises concerns about a substantial number of people who indicate that high levels of stress and anxiety are having a negative impact on other aspects of their integration. Factors that negatively influence mental health and well being require early intervention and appropriate preventative support to make sure that they do not become chronic. Where beneficiaries have been identified as having ‘complex’ issues, they are able to benefit immediately from the British Red Cross enhanced support service as well as the wider holistic service approach. These new refugees relate the positive impact that this support is having on their ability to manage the challenges of their lives (section 7.3). We have also seen from the data in year two that the work of all partners makes a very significant contribution to preventing isolation and sharing cultural knowledge with new refugees. In addition, it appears that the partnership relationship between HIS and British Red Cross has enhanced beneficiaries’ awareness of and therefore access to the British Red Cross and other family reunion opportunities.

Data from years one and two of the HIS programme suggests that new refugees need support whilst they are learning the English language and gaining knowledge about UK society and systems. With appropriate early intervention beneficiaries can

³³ [Research reports about asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland | Scottish Refugee Council](#)

³⁴ From a sample of 154 people, who started ESOL after they received status, the average time from status to an ESOL course was 75 days. This may include people who access ESOL outwith HIS own provision.

generally become proactive and independent. The provision of that timely support however requires intensive input from Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisors and front line staff across the partnership.

10.3. Sustainability

Refugees benefit from the HIS programme for a maximum of twelve months. Thus a key measure of the programme's success or otherwise is the sustainability of outcomes beyond the period of service delivery. As we highlight in Section 2, there is already evidence that the advice, information and advocacy on housing options and rights offered by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisors has a role in helping refugees to select and remain in appropriate tenancies that provide them with a true 'home' from which to build their new lives in Scotland.

Although large amounts of time continue to be spent on crisis interventions relating to system delays within the benefits system, the broader aim of the service is to promote financial stability. As refugees' plans and circumstances change – beginning full-time education; welcoming a new baby to the family; accessing part-time employment – Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisors will refer on to mainstream advice providers – for example Citizens Advice Bureau; Skills Development Scotland – in order that refugees can access ongoing specialist assistance and build their own budgeting and financial literacy skills.

As we note above, enabling refugees to acquire or improve their English language skills through the ongoing partnership with Workers Educational Association Scotland and Glasgow Clyde College is perceived by many refugees as a vital stepping stone

towards further study and/or employment, and so is the bedrock for longer term plans for life in Scotland. And finally, there is evidence that the various activities of the HIS programme can in and of themselves create and consolidate social connections, with refugees reporting that they have made new friends during ESOL or employability classes, or been able to play an active role in community organisations having been made aware of these by their Scottish Refugee Council Integration Adviser.

10.4. Resilience – Vulnerability typology

Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisors continue to use the categorisation system devised at the beginning of the service to guide the allocation of services and indicate progress.

Holistic Integration Service Resilience – Vulnerability typology

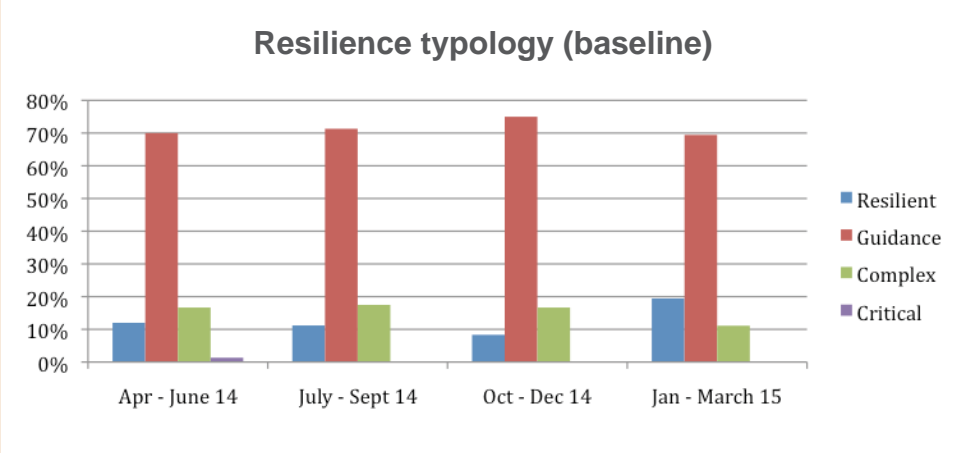
Resilient: Able to operate independently with minimal intervention

Guidance: Require some targeted support but otherwise independent

Complex: Require intensive support to deal with multiple issues

Critical: Experiencing acute problems and require referral to Social Services

The vast majority of beneficiaries are classified as requiring ‘Guidance’ (consistently at around 70%). The graph below, ‘Resilience typology (baseline)’ shows categorisation at full assessment for each quarter of year two.



The most direct impact of the use of the system is in the allocation of the category, ‘Critical’ which will trigger a referral to Social Services (2 cases in year two), and the allocation of the category, ‘Complex’ which will trigger referral to the British Red Cross enhanced support service (58 cases in year two).

Beneficiaries who are referred to the British Red Cross enhanced service receive more intensive one-to-one support, can be accompanied to appointments and may participate in other programmes of the British Red Cross. Our focus group discussion data demonstrates that beneficiaries appreciate this level of support:

“I hope to do something to help my community, but at the moment I am trying to solve my own problems”

The resilience categorisation also provides an indication of beneficiaries’ integration progress. New refugees’ lives fluctuate in complexity and we would not necessarily expect a smooth progression towards ever-increasing levels of resilience. However, it is the aim of the service that by the end of the twelve months of support available through the HIS service most new refugees would classify as ‘resilient’ and be able and confident to access their rights and pursue their life choices with independent agency. It is very difficult to monitor this as the engagement with the service is voluntary and so, not surprisingly, beneficiaries will often stop attending once they are able to act independently.

However we are able to see progression from ‘Complex’, through ‘Guidance’ towards resilience in most of those who do continue to engage as the example below illustrates:

Mr. A. sought advice very soon after his grant of refugee status. He was initially categorised as having ‘Complex’ needs. In the first few months Mr A received intense input from his adviser to resolve documentation issues with Home Office and DWP. In addition he joined the BRC enhanced service.

His resilience improved over the initial six month period after grant of status and he accessed all relevant HIS services. After six months his adviser noted his resilience level had improved and that he was now in need only of support at the 'Guidance' level. His main focus remained upon family reunion, and notes indicate that this was a source of stress and a barrier to his overall integration. Mr A has also had support from the BRC Family Reunion programme

10.5. Partnership

Community of Practice

HIS partner organisations have continued to work closely together during Year Two. The Community of Practice has met bi-monthly throughout the year with each partner in turn bringing a beneficiary case study to the group as a focus of discussion on issues of concern including housing, mental health, education, sanctions and ESOL learning requirements. Following the recommendation of the Year 1 Evaluation Report the Community of Practice invited DWP to attend a meeting to promote more effective two-way sharing of information. We have seen evidence of the impact of this shared learning on for example the holistic approach that partners have been able to develop in supporting new refugees in managing their relationships with the Jobcentre Plus and the conditionality of Jobseeker's Allowance (see section 4.2).

Impact Network

The Joint Management Board brings together senior staff of each partner organisations and meets quarterly to oversee progress of the service, plan responses to potential risk and adapt service provision based on the learning of the service. The Board has achieved its aim of becoming an Impact Network, focusing more on how they can use the learning of the partnership to influence development of future services and policies affecting refugee integration.

Wider Integration Network

The Holistic Integration Service, led by Scottish Refugee Council developed positive working relationships beyond its contractual partnership. The Wider Integration Network brings together key stakeholders from various sectors³⁵ that play a role in refugee integration. The aim of the network is to share the learning of HIS and explore with stakeholders how they may adapt their agenda and practice to better respond to the needs of refugees. There were three events, one in June to launch the Year 1 Evaluation Report, a housing stakeholder event in August and another in December which explored the theme of social connections and how agencies can support refugees to develop varied social networks that will enable them to progress towards their own integration goals. Evaluation of all events showed that participants valued the opportunity to learn from HIS and to meet other agencies to explore new ways of working.

³⁵ E.g. Integration Networks, Colleges, Universities, DWP, Police and Housing Associations.

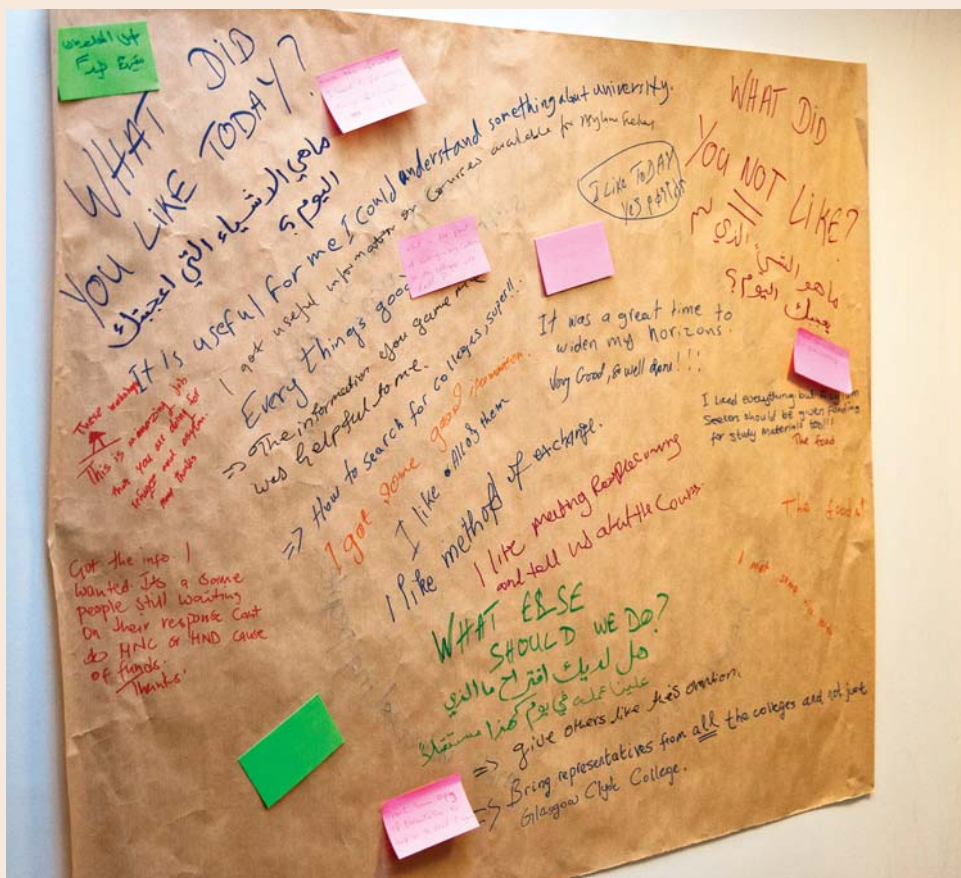


Community Conferences

This year, the Community Conferences programme was designed based on feedback on the year one programme from asylum seekers and refugees, who clearly articulated the agencies with whom they needed to engage. Both conferences, the one on Education and the one on “Getting Status, What’s Next?” benefited hugely from partnership with the University of Strathclyde for the former and North Glasgow Integration Network for the latter. Such partnership with HIS enables refugees to engage directly with mainstream providers who in turn develop a better understanding of the issues refugees face and can start exploring how they need to work differently to ensure refugees can access their services.

The Community Conference model informed the design, content and facilitation of the New Scots Integration Strategy Impact Conference in January 2015. The learning from HIS and other projects was shared and workshops held throughout the day. A third of participants were refugees or asylum seekers (individuals or community representatives). The workshops explored key integration domains e.g. housing, financial stability, education, health and employment; and cross-cutting themes identified through HIS learning such as peer support and a learner-centred approach to integration.





Community Conference Education – Evaluation wall – Photo by Iman Tajik

10.6. Finding out about the HIS Service

There has been some concern this year that changes to asylum advisory services has created delays and for some may have prevented new refugees accessing the HIS programme. During year one the average time for new refugees to make their first

contact with the Holistic Integration Service was twelve days. However during year two this time gradually increased from seventeen days for the first two cohorts³⁶ to eighteen days in the third³⁷ and twenty-five days in the last cohort³⁸. This has coincided with the move of the Asylum Support Service from Scottish Refugee Council to another charitable organisation, Migrant Help. Scottish Refugee Council informed asylum seekers of this change and of the new services available. However, a few beneficiaries reported that they had misunderstood and thought that there were no longer any services available through Scottish Refugee Council. In the past, the fact that the Asylum Advice Services and the Holistic Integration Service were both provided by Scottish Refugee Council enabled direct and generally swift referral of new refugees to the Holistic Integration Service.

Migrant Help is funded by the Home Office to offer asylum advice and guidance to asylum seekers across the U.K. They provide face to face support whilst asylum seekers are living in initial accommodation but beyond that advisers can only be contacted via a national helpline; neither Scottish based nor familiar with the differences in the Scottish context. To mitigate the impact of the changes in asylum advice and in response to feedback from year one Community Conferences, the Holistic Integration Service and North Glasgow Integration Network ran an event for asylum seekers to inform them on their rights post status. Over eighty people attended the event (twice the number expected) and heard about what to expect after receiving a positive asylum decision including: their rights in housing, the need to be proactive in claiming benefits and the availability of the HIS service. The partnership with North Glasgow Integration Network was very successful in promoting the event and reaching asylum seekers. Feedback from the event was very positive.

³⁶ April to June 2014.

³⁷ October to December 2014.

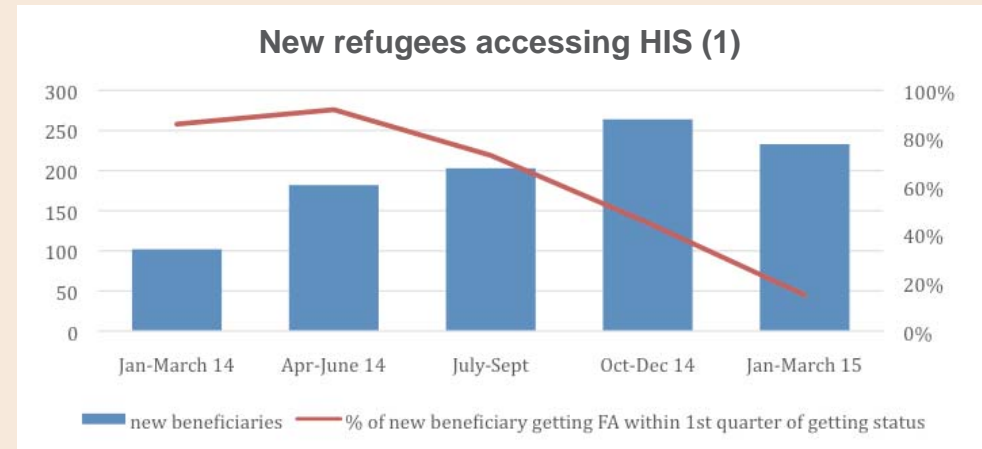
³⁸ January to March 2015.

10.7. The importance of early intervention and intensive support at transition stage

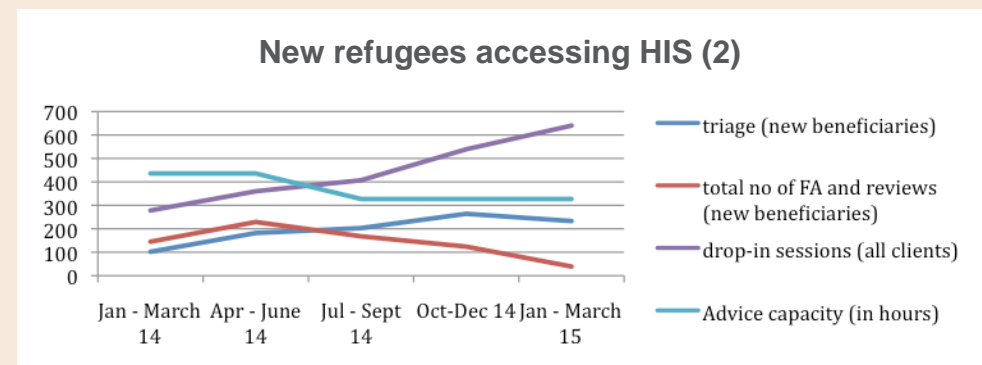
The Holistic Integration Service set out to offer new refugees a full assessment within sixty days of their first presentation to the service. Whilst in the first year, this was achieved well within the sixty day target, this has not been maintained during the second year and new refugees have had to wait up to three months for a full assessment. This delay appears to be due to a combination of external and internal factors.

From the first quarter of 2014 to the first quarter of 2015 the number of new refugees presenting for triage with the HIS programme has increased steadily. There was a particular increase in asylum decisions between October and December 2014. In the following January to March 2015 the intake of new HIS beneficiaries was 128% higher than the same period in 2014. During this time – as we have discussed earlier in this report – Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers have found that accessing basic welfare benefits and housing services often requires high levels of direct intervention and takes far longer than the statutory 28-day ‘move on’ period.

In January 2014 Scottish Refugee Council recruited an additional fourth adviser for six months to mitigate the effects of these pressures on the service. The beneficial effects of this could be seen in the reduction of waiting times for full assessment in year one. However the post was not financially sustainable for the organisation and the team was reduced to three advisers again in June 2014.



The graph ‘New refugees accessing HIS (1)’ shows that while the demand from new beneficiaries rose, fewer and fewer had a full assessment within the first quarter of their first engagement with the service. Our data suggests that the effect of the reduction in Integration Adviser capacity has been compounded by the fact that there has been a rise in time spent by advisers on ‘drop-in’ session as can be seen in the graph below ‘Refugees accessing HIS (2)’



While the number of full assessments completed within the target is decreasing, the number of drop-in sessions has increased constantly – at a faster rate than the increase in numbers of new beneficiaries (triage sessions). It appears that without the benefit of a prompt full assessment to identify and address key beneficiary needs, the core integration advice service has had to revert to ‘fire-fighting’ in response to statutory service failings and emergency need. Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers along with frontline staff from partners have found ways to mitigate some of the impact of these delays on access to other services. Workers Educational Association Scotland continues to offer language assessments soon after new refugees present to Scottish Refugee Council and sends results to advisers who will then refer to Bridges Programmes, Glasgow Clyde College or Workers Educational Association Scotland appropriately. Integration Advisers will also refer to the British Red Cross when identifying people in complex circumstances at drop-in.

While those mechanisms are welcome, there are concerns about the ability of the service to deliver consistently on its prevention objectives. Whilst demand exceeds capacity there is a risk that the service is only reactive, responding to those who are most demanding and not proactive, not reaching people whose circumstances may prevent or inhibit them from taking the initiative to engage.

11. Conclusion

This interim report has explored the concerns identified during the second year of the Holistic Integration Service and provides valuable insights into key issues such as the challenges of living in

temporary accommodation; new refugees’ experiences of claiming benefits from the DWP and HMRC; and, for some, pathways towards employment. Much of the statistical data has been gathered by Scottish Refugee Council Integration Advisers during the course of normal service delivery, a fact only possible due to the project’s integrative approach to data gathering. Focus group discussions and our joint work with HIS partners has enabled us to provide a more rounded picture of the barriers and facilitating factors which shape refugees’ journeys towards integration.

Two overarching themes have now emerged and will provide the backbone to the final phase of the evaluation. The first of these is access to rights for new refugees. Our work in year three will therefore involve further interrogation of the service’s role in ensuring that refugees are aware of their rights and the extent to which, despite being faced with institutional barriers, they are able to independently exercise them.

The second theme addresses new refugees’ opportunities to make and pursue their own life choices independently. Our work in year three will look more closely at progress on language, development of social connection and overall health and well-being. It will also involve a critical evaluation of the extent to which the Holistic Integration Service model promotes sustainable, ongoing integration beyond the duration of the project’s engagement with beneficiaries.

Throughout, the learning partner team will continue to collaborate closely with partners and frontline workers, through the Community of Practice and Impact Network; and most importantly be guided by the voices and experiences of new refugees themselves.



New Scots Impact Conference – workshop on Employment and Welfare with Jobcentre Plus – Photo by Iman Tajik



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